UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

"OBJECT RELATIONS THEORY AND THE IMAGE OF GOD: AN INTEGRATED PERSPECTIVE FOR PASTORAL CARE GIVERS"

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BY

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For Lynne

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ABSTRACT

OBJECT RELATIONS THEORY AND

THE IMAGE OF GOD:

AN INTEGRATED PERSPECTIVE

FOR PASTORAL CARE GIVERS

BY

Alan S. deCourcy

United Theological Seminary 1991

Consultants: Dr. Newell Wert, Dr. Fran Repka

This paper explains the terms and concepts of psychoanalytic object relations theory and imaginative theology for the purpose of providing pastoral ministers with an integrated perspective useful to them as they evoke people's personal images of God. This integrated perspective is used to understand the material presented in two extensive case studies. Implications for the practice of pastoral care are explored by examining the pastoral functions of attending, assessing, and intervening. Supplemental material, used to assist the learning of students in a course entitled "Object Relations Theory and the Image of God," is appendixed.

Thus says the Lord . . .
Behold, I am doing a
new thing:
now it springs forth,
do you not perceive it?

Is. 43:19

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. You are a parish pastor and receive a call from Sue. She tells you that she attended your church for the first time last Sunday, and would like to make an appointment to come in and talk to you. You set up a time for the next day. When she arrives, you observe that she is an attractive, friendly, outgoing woman, who talks quite openly about her own life.

You learn that she is a 26 year old married woman, with two children. She is also a recovering alcoholic, and a diabetic. When Sue was six years old, her mother died from a stroke; her father died when she was sixteen from complications related to his own alcoholism. Following her father's death, she became sexually active and started using drugs, which culminated in her being forced out of her home by her stepmother when she was 18. She attended college for a short period of time, but dropped out after becoming involved with a man who physically and emotionally abused her. After she had used up most of her inheritance on this man, he left her. At that point, feeling deeply depressed and experiencing her life as increasingly out of control, she left the city in which she was living, moved in with her older sister, and entered therapy with a pastoral counselor.

She has been seeing the counselor on a weekly basis for five years, and there have been significant changes in her life during that

time. She has gone through an alcohol treatment program and maintained her sobriety for three years, gotten married, had two children, developed significant relationships with both family and friends, and taken more active care of her diabetes. Her self-esteem and confidence have increased significantly, as has her capacity to take more active responsibility for appropriately meeting her own needs.

Her reason for coming to you relates to a new concern that has only emerged in recent months. Sue reports that as a young child, she had been exposed to her mother's intense faith in a strong and powerful God, and attended church on a regular basis. After her mother's death, God continued to have some importance to her, but after her father's death God ceased to be meaningful. God became important to her again when she entered AA. God was now imaged not so much in terms of the traditional Christian faith perspective within which she was raised, but as the Higher Power, in relationship to Whom she recognized her own helplessness, and upon Whom she depended to maintain her sobriety. She experienced a closeness and a connectedness to this God, especially in her prayer life. In recent months, as the quality of her life has improved over time, she has felt increasingly distant from God. She finds it difficult to experience the same sense of connectedness that she used to feel, and looks back nostalgically on how it used to be. She worries that she is getting too self-reliant, too "prideful," and that this threatens her previous close and comforting relationship with God. At times, she has the fantasy something will happen to her husband, and she

feels that this fear is connected with the current state of her relationship with God.

While she is working on these issues in her pastoral counseling, her counselor has been supportive of her desire to "return to Church," as a way of more actively engaging these issues. In recent weeks, she has gone to several different churches, and found the service at your church the most meaningful. She was especially moved by the sermon you preached on Mt. 19:13 - "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them." She wants to talk with you about the possibility of joining your church.

B. You are a spiritual director, and this is your fifth meeting with Sam. Sam is a thirty year old man, who has recently lost his job. He is also giving serious consideration to filing for divorce. He has tried to express his concerns about their relationship to his wife, and she has dismissed them as unfounded and unimportant. In the midst of this struggle, he has found himself increasingly concerned about his relationship with God. He is convinced that pursuing the divorce would make him totally unacceptable to God; the very presence within him of the negative feelings about the relationship with his wife are an indication to him of his basic failure to be a decent human being. In a recent conversation, his mother told him that God had revealed to her that Sam's feelings about his marriage were an indication that he was mentally unstable.

In prior conversations with Sam, you have learned that his father and mother divorced when he was two; he did not see his father again until he was in his twenties. He was raised by his mother and

stepfather. His mother disparaged his father; any interest Sam expressed in him was reacted to by his mother as a betrayal. From what he has shared with you about his early experiences, you have concluded Sam's mother has frequently interacted with him in a highly irrational, sometimes paranoid fashion, and communicated to him that in some fundamental way there is something wrong with him. His attempts as a child to express genuine feelings and wishes were responded to punitively.

You like Sam, and have been impressed by his sensitivity, creativity, humor, and his care and concern for the feelings of other persons, especially his 8 year old son. Yet he is oblivious to these positive qualities. Sam seems determined to disparage himself, as if his life is lived out of some need to validate his mother's perception of him--this has been true in his professional and personal life, and he appears to be attempting to make it equally true in his relationship with you. Your attempts to either affirm Sam yourself, or raise the possibility of God's valuing of him, have been adamantly resisted.

In this session, Sam presents the following dream:

> I'm working with a group of people tracking down a person. It appears to be a game of cops and robbers. The person I'm looking for is a man and viscous, looks like a monster. I feel a great need to subdue this person, though I'm not sure if I'm trying to kill him or just capture him. Either way, in the attempt to get him, we, the monster person and I, end up hurting each other. I feel the pain of my injuries in the dream. I do not know the people I have banded with to subdue the monster/person, but I feel connected with them, somehow that we belonged together. In my dream this bond is strongly felt. We were all together to stop the monster/person. I do not know who the monster/person is, what he has done, and why we were trying to rid ourselves of him. As the dream continues I become truly disheartened, as

the people I have banned with to fight the monster/person have begun, one by one, to turn against me, siding with the monster/person. I feel both the physical pain of being injured by whatever weapons were used and the emotional pain caused by the defection of my companions. I'm in a police station. I'm nervous, somewhat scared, but confident that I had done right by elimination of the monster/person. I was waiting, along with the rest of the people in the crowd, to go before a judge. We were all standing in a line waiting our turn. The guys in the group told me to plead guilty, that it would go easier on me if I did. They said that if I pleaded innocent something bad would happen. To prove the point, a man who was there agreed to plead innocent just to let me know. The judge was a booming voice blaring from a loudspeaker. Where he or she really was, was not known, but somehow hidden from everyone's view, including the person appearing before him. I know it was a "him" because of the voice. Anyway, the man stumbled before the judge, pleaded innocent. I don't know what happened, only that it wasn't good. When I pleaded guilty, the judge bellows that I've blown it and must pay the consequences. Of course, I was confused, not really certain of what I was guilty of to begin with and then, not pleading innocent like the others who walk away, I was zapped. The loudspeaker judge loudly proclaimed my guilt with a bolt of electricity, causing me to double over in pain. Trying to stand, I discovered that I had been crippled, but could still walk, or hobble, or whatever. The loudspeaker judge then announced that someone would be coming to escort me to my next destination. A young woman, clad only in a black leotard came prancing up to me, yelling all kinds of nonsense that I can't remember. I knew when I saw her that I had been sentenced to hell by the loudspeaker judge, and she was taking me there. She led me into a chamber, down a long corridor, which at first I thought was only leading to hell, until later I realized it was hell. On either side of the corridor were displays, much like walking through a museum, that depicted scenes of my not so righteous past. This walk through the chamber, I knew, would be my eternal damnation. I asked the woman if I was right. She grabbed me, pulled me to her, and put her arms around my neck. With a hiss in her voice she said: "Only until I give you a new life."

C. You are a denominational executive, with responsibility for placing pastors in churches. Frank is a forty year old minister who has been serving a church for five years. You are aware that under Frank's leadership, that church has made significant growth, increased

its membership, and recently embarked on a new building campaign. You have been very pleased with the work he is doing, and the reports from the congregation have been excellent. Frank has asked for an appointment to see you.

When Frank arrives, you are shocked when he tells you that he is asking to be moved to another parish. He says he feels he's gotten in over his head, and is not going to be able to meet the expectations of his congregation to lead them through the building project. When you point out that everyone seems to think he's doing an excellent job, and that you have every confidence in him, he says that's just because he puts on a good act; most of the time, he's feeling like a phony, just waiting to be found out. He angrily states that he's tired of trying to meet the constant demands that are being made on him, and that all he wants to do is get away. He doesn't really care where you place him.

You ask him what he thinks God's will is for him at this point in his life. He says he feels like he's always letting God down, and that if he were really doing what God wanted him to be doing, he would feel satisfied with himself; no matter how much he does, it never feels like enough. As he talks, he goes from sadness to anger. He feels he has been given a responsibility by God to be a good shepherd and feed God's sheep, but that he's not up to that task, and is subsequently disappointing the very God he is trying to serve.

These three vignettes contain material that has been presented to me in my work as a pastoral counselor. However, as I have indicated by setting the material in several different contexts, the essential

questions posed by these persons could equally well be put to pastoral persons functioning outside of the counseling situation. While the responses called for will in part be dictated by the particular context, all such responses involve some dimension of pastoral care, and therefore need to be informed by as complete an understanding of the person as possible. Such an understanding is gained from careful listening. Despite our best efforts to listen openly to what a person presents to us, we never really engage in "perspective free" listening. We seek to illuminate what we hear with some light that we bring to it--our listening perspective. The question to be put to such a perspective is: does it light up the material in such a way that it enables the pastoral care provider to understand the person, and respond from that understanding in a manner that truly meets the needs of the other? The purpose of the research reported on in this document was to develop such a listening perspective.

The stimulus to this work grew out of my work as a pastoral counselor in which certain clients engaged me with the kinds of issues that are raised in the material presented above. These three vignettes are about persons who, in one way or another, are involved in a growth process. The direction in which they are moving (with therapeutic help) can be summarized as follows: all three persons are in a process of trying to develop both increased self-esteem, and a greater capacity to care for, and take care of, themselves. Valuing the self is being demonstrated in taking more personal responsibility for meeting needs, trying (consciously or unconsciously) to enter into relationships with others which are less characterized by exploitation, abuse, or dependency; experiencing higher degrees of

pleasure and satisfaction; and attempting to actualize personal potential. These persons are trying to move in the direction of age appropriate autonomy and towards the expression of a healthy narcissism.[1]

As this is happening, they are experiencing conflict, and it is this conflict that is focused on in the material presented above. The conflict centers around the fact that the God who has been a meaningful and significant part of each of these persons' lives is imaged as opposing what is taking place. God is felt to be in opposition to further growth along the two lines mentioned above (autonomy and healthy narcissism), and there is a fear that continued movement in either direction may result in experiences of abandonment/punishment, and the possible loss of a formerly sustaining relationship.

Being helpful to these persons meant understanding the nature of this conflict in depth, and responding in a manner genuinely therapeutic. As a pastoral counselor, my listening perspective had to be both theologically and psychologically informed, and I experienced some difficulty at both levels.

The psychological perspective that originally informed my work as a pastoral counselor was a fairly traditional psychoanalytic point of view. This theory emphasized intrapsychic dynamics (as opposed to interpersonal events), the power of impulses and drives, the motivating force of the pleasure principle, and the developmental significance of the Oedipal crisis.[2] Listening to the kind of conflict described above--where self-esteem and on-going relatedness

are central--from such a perspective, failed to provide me with the confidence that I fully understood what was going on; when I engaged these persons from such a perspective, their responses did not leave me feeling that I had made significant contact with them.

Prior to my undertaking this project, I had begun to read the work of some clinicans who, while working within the psychoanalytic tradition, were shifting their clinical attention from its original focus on the structure of the psyche defined in terms of id, ego, and superego, to a new focus on the growth, development, and pathology of the psychic self. These authors defined as fundamental to psychological health and wholeness the emergence within the psyche of what was variously called the "true self," the "real self," the "integrated self," or the "cohesive self."[3] While there are significant differences among these authors, there is general agreement in viewing the self as a psychological construct that develops within the psyche over time, and that, having developed to a certain point, attains a degree of structuralization and stability, and is subsequently known through its functioning as expressed in inner experience and outer behavior. In 1975, Margaret Mahler published a book which reported her observations of the mother-infant relationship during the first three years of life.[4] In that book, Mahler, working from within a psychoanalytic framework, laid out in detail what she called the "separation-individuation" process. The fundamental point in Mahler's work was that the psychological self (the "sense of self") is "born" through a process of separation and individuation from the primary parenting person (usually the mother) that takes place over the first three years of life. Mahler argued

that the interaction between the primary parenting person and the infant was a critical factor in facilitating the development of the self and that the "tuned-iness" (empathy) of the parent to the genuine needs and aspirations of the growing child was of vital importance in this process. Further, she argued that what occurs within this separation-individuation process affects the person throughout their life, and that disturbances of the self seen in adults can best be understood by reference to this early developmental phase.

Mahler's work was the outgrowth of, and a stimulus to, a school of psychological thought that has come to be called "object relations theory." Object relations theory focuses on the effect on human personality and behavior of the internalization within the psyche of our earliest relationships. It argues that it is out of such relationships that we develop our psychological sense of self and other, and that internalized mental images of self and other come to exist in a balance within the psyche. Object relations theory, in focusing on the significance of our early connections to the "other" (the so-called "object") and their impact on the development of the self, paved the way for Mahler's description of the process of separation-individuation out of which our internalized sense of self and other emerges.

Hence, object relations theory offered me a clinical theory that took as its area of investigation the development and "health" of the self, and posited that the self emerges and grows in response to an "other" experienced as empathically responsive to, and in touch with, the needs of the developing self. Such a theory provided both the psychological understanding and therapeutic technique for working with

the kind of conflict described above. As I became more acquainted with object relations theory, I also became more convinced that that theory had significant theological implications, and could facilitate my attempts to more successfully integrate theological and psychological perspectives. Doing that became more important as it became increasingly obvious that these clients were presenting an issue that was spiritual as well as psychological. Part of their experience was that of wrestling with their God. To be helpful to them, I needed to develop a theological perspective that was adequate to the task of listening, and responding, to this struggle.

Since becoming a pastoral counselor most of my energy had gone into developing psychological and psychotherapeutic understandings, as opposed to updating and integrating my theology. My theological perspective on what I was doing, such as it was, was interpersonal and experiential, and could best be captured in the following quotation:

> Any language is authentically theological which points to what is experienced as holy and sacred . . . Theology must concern itself not only with the Wholy other God but with the sacred 'Ground of Being' (Tillich)--not with a unique incarnation in past history, but with the principles, powers, and persons which are presently operative to make and keep life luminous and sacred . . .[5]

I believed that what my clients most needed from me was psychotherapeutic skill and effectiveness, and if I supplied that, they would discover ways of finding the resources they needed for spiritual growth and development; that when I was doing therapy in depth, I was most meaningfully engaged in ministry; that God was somehow present in and through the work we were doing; and that

through the therapeutic process, persons became more capable of faith, hope, and love, and therefore were moving in the direction that God willed for them.

This perspective was sufficient for working with and understanding many of the clients that I saw, but not for those experiencing the kind of conflict that I have described above. First of all, for these clients their relationship with God, and the image they had of God, was experienced by them as central to the work they were doing in therapy. Their message to me was: "My image of God is related to my image of myself. You can't tamper with one without tampering with the other."

As I listened to the theological and biblical material around the images of God that such clients held, I became aware that I had not sufficiently integrated my theological and psychological perspectives on what I was doing. I was encouraging these persons to move in their therapeutic work in the direction of what I have earlier called age appropriate autonomy and healthy narcissism. These clients pushed me to reexamine if there really was an underlying compatibility between that which is valued in therapy and that which is valued in faith. To be truly helpful to such persons, I needed to develop more clarity about this issue within myself.

I have been helped to understand what I was wrestling with here by John McDargh's description of the differences between the "functional approach" and the "substantive approach" to the study of religion.[6] The functional approach is concerned less with the content of religious beliefs and more with the way that religion or belief function in the life of the believer. McDargh writes:

> The functional approach represents a shift away from regarding religion chiefly as a set of certain readily identifiable cultural products (religion as a noun), and towards a concept of religious 'function' (religion as an adjective or adverb) . . . From a functional vantage 'knowing' is not an intellectual or notional assent to a set of propositions of a special sort, but a profoundly affective process involving the construction of a system of meaning, a comprehensive orientation to reality, in terms of which one is moved to act in the world and is guided in that action.[7]

The substantive approach to religion, on the other hand, focuses attention on the content of religious faith. McDargh writes of a "renewed concern for the way in which faith is mediated through concrete images and symbols . . . At least in the West, the content that most urgently demands analysis is the persistent presence in the faithing process of our conscious and unconscious images of God."[8]

Using this distinction to help define the issues I confronted with the client group under discussion, I could see that I had been comfortably operating from a functional approach. This particular client group challenged the adequacy of my exclusive use of this perspective and pushed me in the direction of dealing more directly with the object of faith, that is, of God.

As I became more intentional in examining the theological dimensions of my clinical work, I began looking at a variety of theological perspectives. In the course of doing that, I encountered what can best be defined as "metaphorical" or "imaginative" theology.[9] I found there a perspective that illuminated the theological dimensions of my work in a manner similar to the way that object relations theory had the psychological. The primary concern in metaphorical theology is with the imaginative construction of personal

and group images of God, images which are relevant to contemporary issues and concerns. Metaphorical theology sees the human construction of such images as the central theological task. Emphasis is placed on the significance of this image of the "other" in a person's growth and development, and there is a focus on the appropriateness of changing that image in light of new situations and new information.

At this point, the reading I was doing in object relations theory, the kinds of theological questions that were emerging for me, and my on-going work with clients, began to fit more closely together. Object relations theory, with its vision of the healthy self, its focus on the process of growth, and, most importantly, its emphasis on the development of the "self-in-relationship to other," had obvious parallels with dimensions of Christian faith and theology. I felt strongly that much could be gained by developing a perspective that integrated the insights of object relations theory with a metaphorically sensitive theology.

In August, 1985, I had enrolled in the D.Mn. program at United Theological Seminary in Dayton. At that time I was working as Director of Education and Pastoral Psychotherapist at the Pastoral Psychotherapy Institute in Cincinnati, Ohio. In 1985 I also became a "Lecturer in Pastoral Psychology" at the Athenaeum of Ohio, a Catholic Seminary offering a Master's Degree in pastoral counseling.

My work in the D.Mn. program has lasted over a six year period, and can be summarized as going through a sequence of stages:

> 1) choosing the area of interest and concern around which to focus a project; 2) research related to the project design:

> working with clients, reading, reflecting, consulting; 3) designing a project that would both make use of the knowledge acquired, and be a way of gaining further knowledge; 4) implementing the project 5) and evaluating the project.

The project that finally emerged for me was designing and teaching a course to students at the Athenaeum, entitled "Object Relations Theory and the Image of God." The description of the course sent out to perspective students reads as follows:

> Object relations theory is a view of psychological development that describes the process by which our earliest experiences with primary caregivers become internalized within the human psyche. The results of this process have a significant impact both on our developing sense of self, and on our experience of others. This course will pay particular attention to the way our object relations may impact how we imagine and experience our relationship with God. This course is designed primarily to help pastoral counselors use object relations theory in their work, but might also benefit others who are working with issues of spiritual growth and development.

The results of all five stages of the D.Mn. process are reflected in the content of this document, which represents a final stage in itself. What I am attempting to do here is to bring together what I have learned and present it in a manner so that learning can be appropriated by other pastoral care providers in their own work. I use the term "pastoral care providers" as opposed to pastoral counselors, because I became convinced as a result of my research that object relations theory has meaning and value for the parish pastor, as well as for the pastoral counseling specialist.

My material is presented in the following format: Chapter 2 is an introduction to, and an explanation of, the language and point of

view of object relations theory. This is provided without any comment on its theological implications, or its potential usefulness for pastoral care and counseling. Chapter 3 explores in greater depth the concept of the "transitional object." This concept receives special focus because it has particular relevance to the application of object relations theory to pastoral care. Chapter 4 shifts from the psychological to the theological, and explores metaphorical theology. Chapter 5 brings together theological and psychological perspectives by looking at the "object-representation of God." Chapter 6 consists of two extensive case studies, coming out of my own clinical work, illuminated by the perspectives presented earlier. Chapter 7 lays out and summarizes the implications for the practice of pastoral care of looking at issues from the perspective I have developed.

As I turn now to a detailed examination of object relations theory, let me remind the reader of where I began: with a hurting person, sitting before me, hoping that they can be heard, understood, and responded to. My belief is that as a result of the learning process I have undergone, I am far better prepared to meet that need than I was before; my hope is that by sharing what I have learned, others may be similarly empowered.

Footnotes to Chapter 1

1. Both these terms will be discussed more extensively later in the text. "Age appropriate autonomy" implies the capacity to take care of oneself, within the limits of one's actual ability, as opposed to needing to be taken care of. It does not describe persons who function as if they have no need of relationships with others, but rather those who can relate to others interdependently. "Healthy narcissism" is a more ambiguous term, and my understanding of it relies heavily on the work of Heinz Kohut. The term "narcissistic" has generally been used to define someone who was pathologically over-invested in the themselves to the detriment of the needs and feelings of others. "Healthy narcissism" is the foundation of self-esteem, and defines the sense a person has that they are valuable, significant, and able. Kohut argues that this healthy narcissism allows one to relate creatively and meaningful to other persons. In Kohut's view, healthy narcissism develops from feelings of grandiosity and entitlement that arise in the course of normal development, if those feelings are responded to by an empathic and valued other.

See Heinz Kohut, The Analysis of the Self (New York: International Universities Press, 1971); The Restoration of the Self (New York: International Universities Press, 1977); and How Does Analysis Cure (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984). For an excellent summary of Kohut's thought, especially its relevance for the work of the parish pastor, see Robert Randall, Pastor and Parish: The Psychological Core of Ecclesiastical Conflicts (New York: Human Sciences Press, 1988), 28-81.

2. See Stephen Mitchell, Relational Concepts in Psychoanalysis: An Integration (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 63-123, and Fred Pine, Drive, Ego, Object and Self: A Synthesis for Clinical Work (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1990).

3. See Harry Gutrip, Psychoanalytic Theory, Therapy, and the Self (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1973) for a description of the emergence of the self as a central concept within psychoanalytic thought.

4. Margaret Mahler, Fred Pine, and Anni Bergman, The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1975).

5. Sam Keen, To A Dancing God (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 103.

6. John McDargh, Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion: On Faith and the Imaging of God (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, Inc. 1983), 6-14.

7. Ibid, 7.

8. Ibid, 13.

9. See Sallie McFague, Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982) and Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987); and Gordon Kaufmann, The Theological Imagination: Constructing the Concept of God (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1981), and Theology for a Nuclear Age (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985).

10. For material used in the teaching of this course, including evaluation form, see the Appendix.

Chapter 2

OBJECT RELATIONS THEORY

A. A Note on Pscyhodynamic Theory and Metapsychology.

In this and the following chapter, a psychodynamic model--object relations theory--is examined. The ideas presented need to be intelligible not only to persons who may be practiced pastoral counselors, but also to general pastoral care providers. For that reason, this introduction is included for the reader who may have limited exposure to psychodynamic thinking.

A theory is an attempt to organize a body of data into some kind of coherent and connected whole. It does this for a particular purpose, and its value is judged by how well it serves that purpose. Hence, examining a theory involves looking at what empirical, observable phenomena the theory is seeking to explain, and for what purpose it is trying to do that.

Psychodynamic theory construction always begins with persons. Even as complex and sophisticated a psychodynamic theory as Freud's, developed out of his attempt to understand and help the hurting persons who presented themselves to him for treatment. Psychodynamic theories are attempts to explain more fully the psychological dimensions of human experience. To do this, a model of the mind is developed conceptually that can be used to interpret current data, gain new insights, and inform therapeutic interventions.

Psychiatrist Thomas Paolino offers the following definition of psychodynamic theory:

> A psychodynamicist describes isolated components and experiences of the mind as possessing numerous distinguishing characteristics and functions. Psychodynamic theories conceptualize the mind as consisting of a coherent arrangement of separate hierarchically ordered psychic processes and functions that operate in specific ways and directions. The psychodynamic functional anatomy of the mind always includes identifiable psychological factors that are often in conflict and are powerful, usually unconscious, always influential motivating forces in human behavior . . . It should be added that the term psychodynamic refers not only to theories of psychic functioning and human behavior but also to psychotherapeutic techniques based on such theories.[1]

Any fully developed psychodynamic theory involves a "metapsychology." Just as theology is speculation about the nature of God, and God's relationship to all aspects of creation, metapsychology is "speculation about the origin, structure, function, etc. of the mind and about the relation between the mental and the physical . . ."[2] Both disciplines use metaphorical language in the construction of their models. As Paolino points out:

> The mind is, of course, an anthropomorphism and does not concretely exist. Nevertheless, according to the psychodynamic perspective, the mind is a concept of experimental value since it provides some logical explanation of observed thoughts, feelings, and behavior.[3]

An understanding of the metaphorical nature of psychodynamic language helps to avoid the problem of "reification"--viewing as actual entities, or physical objects, the theoretical constructs that are used to organize and make sense out of clinical data. If the

concepts of psychodynamic theory become reified, then the actual person in their wholeness, and the concrete experience that such language tries to understand and explain, may be lost sight of.

Freud's understanding of this potential problem is suggested by his own words:

> I see no necessity to apologize for the imperfections of this or of any other similar imagery. Analogies of this kind are only intended to assist us in our attempt to make the complications of mental functioning intelligible by dissecting the functions and assigning its different constituents to different component parts of the apparatus . . . we are justified, in my view, in giving free reign to our speculation so long as we retain the coolness of our judgment and do not mistake the scaffolding for the building.[4]

B. Object Relations Theory: What is it?

Object relations theory can be described as a theory that seeks to account for, and explain, the condition of the "self," primarily for the purpose of facilitating therapeutic effectiveness. The term "self" as it is used here is a term applied to two different dimensions of human experience, resulting at times in some theoretical confusion. First, "self" commonly refers to what might more accurately be called "sense of self"--the deeply personal and subjective sense each person has of who they really are, that which is "I," subject rather than object, self rather than other. Self, defined in this way, is only known fully to the person who is that self; it cannot be known to another by external observation, but only through an interpersonal process involving self-revelation, empathy, and introspection.

Secondly, the term "self" is sometimes used in a more technical sense as a theoretical construct to mean an intrapsychic structure (like ego or id) that is defined for theoretical and clinical purposes as responsible for certain aspects of psychological functioning. When used in this way, the condition of the self can be explored by examining how a particular person is functioning. The following is a list of psychological capacities which are often theoretically tied to the condition of the self:

1. The capacity to "identify one's unique individuative wishes and to use autonomous initiative and assertion to express them in reality . . ."[5] This means the person has an underlying sense of who they really are, and can act out of that sense.

2. The capacity to maintain self-esteem from internal resources in the face of failure and criticism.

3. The capacity to be realistically aware of both competencies and limitations, without excessive grandiosity or deflation.

4. The capacity to "autonomously devise means to limit, minimize, and soothe painful affects" (such as anxiety or tension).[6]

5. The capacity to relate to, and value others as differentiated; to experience them as "other," and not as extensions of the self, existing primarily to meet the needs of the self.

6. The capacity to commit to an objective or a relationship, and to maintain that commitment in the face of difficulty and disappointment.

7. The capacity to acknowledge and tolerate ambivalence.

8. The capacity to tolerate being alone - to continue to feel some sense of connection even when others are not physically present.[7]

Such a concept of the self is especially important when this theory is being used for therapeutic purposes. The relative health or condition of the self can be assessed in terms of how well it actually performs those functions which it is able to do in potential.

The healthy self is broadly imaged in object relations theory as demonstrated through a person's capacity to be open to, and expressive of, the self they truly are (as opposed to simply adapting and conforming to the wishes and expectations of others), and to be related to others in a manner which recognizes their "otherness" and values them even as they are recognized as other. A person able to function this way, in the language of object relations theory, could be said to have a "cohesive, reality related, object related" self structure.[8]

Psychologist Althea Horner sums this up in non-clinical terminology as the capacity for "being and loving." She writes:

> I have used the terms 'being' and 'loving' in a particular way: to denote the desired end points of a developmental process that begins at the very start of life. 'Loving' does not refer only to the momentary overflowing of good feeling toward someone else. It entails an emotional attachment to another human being, one predicated not only on one's dependency needs, but also on one's valuing and cherishing the other as the real person he or she is. It is an attachment that is constant over time and circumstance. Love does not disappear when there is separation. Love does not die when there is anger. 'Being' refers to that clear and uninterrupted sense 'I am. I exist. I go on.' It is the capacity to experience oneself as a separate, real, and whole human being. The self-perception of the individual who has this capacity involves neither overidealization nor undeserved contempt. There is a realistic acceptance and integration of the many diverse qualities that characterize any real person.[9]

Object relations theory works with both these understandings of the self and the objective and subjective phenomena associated with them, by examining the development, structure, and dynamic relationship of what are called self- and object-representations. It is difficult to define with exact precision what is meant in object relations theory by this term, "representation." Basically, it refers to a "complex mental phenomena"[10] in which certain patterns, or "schemas," are organized within the psyche out of early interpersonal experiences. Horner writes: "A schema, then, is an enduring organization or structure within the mind and is the outcome of the process of organization-assimilation, accommodation, generalization, differentiation, and integration. The various self- and object-representations . . . can be understood as particular schemas that come about and undergo change . . ."[11] Once these patterns, or representations, are formed, they become the filters through which we perceive both self and other. Memory is a critical part of how these representations develop and are maintained, but their meaning goes beyond what is normally associated with the idea of a memory. They are not so much memories of specific events, as they are a sense of the way things are.

A basic premise of object relations theory is that the psychological self emerges as part of a process in the earliest years of life, during which time the developing child is in close interaction with a primary caring "other;" significant aspects of the child's experience with that other become organized and internalized (structured) within the psyche in the form of self- and

object-representations; and the state of these object relations ultimately determines the condition of the self. N.G. Hamilton writes:

> In addition to our loves, friendships, and rivalries, we have intricate relationships within us. They are not static images, but rather powerful influences on how we feel about ourselves and relate to others. The people around us also affect us within ourselves. The exploration of these internal and external relationships has led to a growing body of knowledge called object relations theory.[12]

Object relations theory posits that human beings have an innate tendency to organize experience into meaningful patterns. In other words, an essential aspect of personhood is the capacity to give meaning to experience at both conscious and unconscious levels. Such a capacity for organization enables children to begin to make sense out of, and ultimately manage, themselves and their world. This theory describes how this occurs in the earliest developmental stages.

If we attempted to describe the experience of the child from a vantage point outside the child, we might say that the child is experiencing a group of things that are self (subject) and distinguish that from another group of things that we would call other (object). A second significant way of organizing experiences (which we would have to be within the child to "see") would be between experiences that were pleasurable (good) and experiences that were not pleasurable (bad). Object relations theory describes the process by which such experiences begin to be organized into these meaningful patterns by the child, the mechanisms used in this organizational process, and its eventual impact on human functioning and experience. A therapeutic approach based on object relations theory develops techniques and

interventions that reflect this understanding of human development and functioning. Horner writes:

> . . . think in terms of the early mental processes by means of which the newborn infant organizes its world into meaningful patterns. One basic pattern is that of self-the self-representation-while another is that of object-the object-representation . . . The structural and dynamic relationships between the self-representation and the object-representation constitute what we refer to as object relations.[13]

In classical analytic theory, the term "object" has been used to refer to something that the child invests with meaning and emotion (cathects), and which, in turn gratifies the child. In the phrase, "I love that apple," the apple is the object, has special significance for the child, and is invested with the feeling of love. Hence, the "object" could refer to anything the child connects with and derives pleasure from--a person, inanimate thing, thought or fantasy; it can be either internal or external to the person.[14] In object relations theory, the term "object" generally refers to a person or something which stands for that person. "The object is a person or his or her representation, with varying degrees of veridicality based upon distortion by drive and defensive processes . . . What defines contemporary object relations theory is not simply the primacy of object relatedness but a view of mental life that is organized around self- and object-representations and their relations and repetitions in addition to an organization of mental life around drive and defense, and conflict."[15] An "object-representation" is the internal representation that is organized in the psyche of what was originally experienced as an external object.

During the first three years of life, the child is in a period of extraordinarily rapid psychological and physiological change. As these changes occur, they need to be organized, as do the experiences to which they lead. That which the child experiences as uniquely his or hers, as subject rather than object, become organized in the form of a "self-representation." The "self-representation," like the object-representation, is also an organized structure within the psyche; but in this case, what is organized is that which "pertains to one's own person in a fundamental, biologic, way."[16]

Self- and object-representations are organized as units, called "object relations units." Hamilton writes:

> These units consist of a self-representation and an internal object-representation connected by a drive or affect, such as love or hate, hunger or satiation.[17]

As a result of different kinds of experiences, a person may have several different object relations units within the psyche at the same time, which can be activated at different times under different circumstances. It may be helpful to image object relations units as persons on a seesaw. The two work in tandem; the position (or state) of the one impacts the position of the other. Since the tendency of the human organism is to move to higher levels of integration, the infant moves in the direction of organizing disparate self- and object-representations into coherent wholes. The movement is in the direction of organizing one overall, composite integrated self-representation, and one overall integrated

object-representation. The capacity of the child to successfully accomplish this task is an important constituent of the healthy self.

Object relations theory is a developmental psychology, seeking to describe the process through which self- and object-representations emerge as stable structures within the psyche over time. Margaret Mahler, in her book, The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant, conceptualized this as a process of "separation-individuation" in which the child moves through a set of clearly defined and predictable stages from birth to age three. As any developmental psychology does, this perspective makes assumptions about what occurs within this process under optimal conditions and what can go wrong to create problems.

> Psychological health and psychopathology can both be understood in terms of the vicissitudes of object relations development and its associated organizing and integrating impact. This developmental sequence begins with the stage of normal autism at birth and proceeds through the process of attachment to the stage of normal symbiosis, which is symbolized by the undifferentiated self-object representation. From this point the child faces the developmental task of the separation-individuation process. This process is sub-divided into the subphases of hatching, the practicing period, and the rapprochement subphase, and it culminates in the achievement of identity and object constancy. At this point the child, and thus the adult he will become, has a firm sense of self and differentiated other, is able to relate to others as whole persons rather than just as need satisfiers, and can tolerate ambivalence without having to maintain a split between good and bad object representations. He will also have the ability to sustain his or her own narcissistic equilibrium and good self-feeling from resources within the self . . . that comes about through the transmuting internalization of maternal functions into the self.[18]

This rather dense paragraph contains the essence of what happens in the separation-individuation process. What follows is an attempt

to unpack this paragraph, explain its terms, and look at the overall process it describes. As we begin to examine this process in more detail, it is helpful to stress what we are looking at. From an observation point located outside the child, we will be observing a particular infant, endowed with certain traits and dispositions, involved in a rapid process of neurophysiological change and growth, in interaction with that particular and unique environment into which he or she has been born, an environment that for the child is essentially made up of the primary nurturing person who cares for him or her. As this interaction takes place, we will observe the child acting within that environment, in both a proactive and a reactive manner, and likewise, the environment interacting with the child. Each affects, and is affected by, the other.

From an observation point within the child (and therefore more speculative), we will be observing the experiences stemming from these interactions being organized into ever more complex self- and object-representations. Within this process, we will observe that which was once primarily external becoming increasingly organized and structured internally. What are organized are the representations (image, idea, feeling, fantasy, memory) of self and other in interaction. This is the process that finally leads, in Mahler's words, to the "psychological birth of the human infant."

C. Autism

"Autism" is the stage the child enters upon at birth, and lasts for approximately two months. For the infant in this stage, there is no psychic sense of self and other, no differentiation between inner

and outer. Since the autistic child doesn't distinguish one object from another he does not have object directed responses. He is in a state that might be described as unattached.

As outside observers, we know, of course, that there is a real "other" out there--that person who has primary responsibility for caring for the child. "Caring" means not only providing for physical well-being, but also supporting the need for psychological growth and development. The essential psychological need of the child is to be in relationship with a primary caregiver who is guided in their caring by a capacity to empathize with, respond to, and support in a non-intrusive way, that particular child's unique developmental journey, in both its inner and outer expressions. While those expressions will change as the child grows, this need remains constant throughout the separation-individuation process. If that need is to be met, then it is necessary for the child to first "enter into" a sufficiently close relationship with a primary caregiver. He does this through a process of attachment.

Imagine a person setting out to climb to the top of a mountain. The ultimate goal is to get to the top. Accomplishing that goal means the prior accomplishment of a number of sub-tasks that must be carried out successfully if the overarching goal is to be achieved. The first of these sub-goals might be the organization of a solid base camp, set up at the base of the mountain, that is well stocked with the supplies needed for the rest of the journey, and which the climber could be in touch with should difficulties develop. The child sets up her base camp through the process of attachment.

At birth, the child is obviously a profoundly dependent being, arriving mostly as potential. Attachment is necessary for the unfolding of that potential, since it is through attachment that the child draws from the environment that which she needs to grow. The child begins to move out of autism on the basis of experiences which promote attachment. Such experiences stem from innate attachment seeking behavior on the child's part and positive responses by the caregiver to such behavior.[19] The mothering person is ideally available to meet the child's basic physical needs, initiate positive and pleasurable interactions, and function in a soothing and comforting way under a variety of circumstances. The process of attachment is facilitated when the primary caregiver provides the child focused attention, and is available and responsive in a way that is consistent but not intrusive.

As is true throughout the entire developmental process, "success" here is the result of a combination of factors: the innate and genetic makeup of the child; normal neurophysiologic growth and development; the capacity of the personal environment the child finds himself in to respond to the particular needs of that child; and external, environmental events (family illnesses, financial problems, etc.) that may impact either parent or child while this process is taking place. Each of these factors affects the other in a circular fashion.

If things go well, then attachment, or "bonding" takes place, the child moves out of the autistic phase, and into the stage called symbiosis. Hamilton writes:

> Dawning awareness of a two-person relationship derives from both gathering experience and a maturing nervous system. Neurophysiologically, the ego functions of memory, cognition, and motor coordination are unfolding. They allow the infant to organize and remember experiences of being hungry and fed, held and laid down, and of seeing, hearing, and smelling his mother and his own body. These experiences provide a budding sense of self in relation to object. The child shifts from the one-person monadic system of autism to the bipolar self-other system of symbiosis. As yet, differentiation is not sufficiently complete to allow for development of a truly two-person relationship.[20]

D. Symbiosis

By arriving at the stage of symbiosis, two new "structures" have emerged that become available to the child for his ongoing journey. The "maternal matrix" is the external, interpersonal result of attachment; the "self-object unit" is the internal, intrapsychic result. The maternal matrix refers to the actual mother and child existing in a bonded, attached relationship which provides external support, and through which the child is supplied with needed resources.[21]

Intrapsychically, symbiosis represents the beginning of object relations, as the experiences of self and other that have taken place in the earliest months of life are organized into the "self-object unit." With the emergence of this first object relations unit, the child begins to have available not only an external source of support and comfort, but an internal resource as well. The process of internalization--taking what is outside and making it part of what is inside--has begun.

Two things regarding the self-object unit are important at this point: first, there is no clear psychic differentiation between self

and object; secondly, the self-object unit does not have autonomy from the maternal matrix. Hamilton addresses this first point when he writes:

> Developmentally, the earliest object relations unit is a symbiotic 'self-object' in which the distinction between self and object is not clear. In the psychic sense, symbiosis means a state of experiencing the self as inextricably intermingled with the object.[22]

Horner addresses the other:

> This dialogue [between mother and child] is the essential maternal matrix within which the organization of the self takes place, and this organization is still indistinguishable from the matrix itself.[23]

This state of affairs has significance for the ongoing developmental process of the child; from this point on, we will be observing simultaneously what is happening in the maternal matrix and what is happening with the self-object unit as we follow the child's progress through the continuing process of separation-individuation. Both the maternal matrix and the self-object unit now become primary resources for the child, with major significance still going to the matrix.

If the child has had positive experiences during the earliest weeks of life, then there will be a comfortable fit between mother and child, and the symbiotic self-object unit will have as its affective tone a positive, pleasurable, and secure feeling. A positive symbiotic experience enables the infant to be grounded in a positive sense of self and other. Symbiosis provides the infant with its first "primitive self feeling," and, under ideal conditions, associates the sense of self with a "pleasurable and safe state."[24] Symbiosis is "traditionally associated with pleasant feelings, such as love,

warmth, satiation, and even ecstasy . . . All mental life begins in symbiosis. It is the matrix out of which our very selves emerge."[25]

In other words, a satisfactory symbiotic experience provides the foundation for the ongoing development of the self. The child who is able to bond and merge internalizes that experience and the feelings associated with it in the form of the self-object unit. Referring back to the metaphor of the mountain climber, a well-supplied base camp has been established (ideally), that the climber can now trust to sustain and support her through the arduous journey ahead.

E. Separation-Individuation

The process of attachment leading to symbiosis is followed by the much longer and more involved separation-individuation process leading to object constancy. The terms "separation" and "individuation" define two slightly different but very closely connected processes the child is undergoing. Separation refers to the child's sense of self as separate and differentiated from others; individuation refers to the child's emerging sense of personal identity.[26] The separation-individuation process is broken down into three "subphases"--hatching, practicing, and rapprochement. Each subphase poses a rather different challenge to the developing child and the significant other. The interaction between the child and that other around these challenges will be organized within the psyche into self- and object-representations.

1. Hatching

Hatching, as the name implies, represents small movements on the child's part to break out of (differentiate from) the symbiotic unit. Such efforts are stimulated both by a positive symbiotic experience,

and by neurophysiological growth and development in the child. Physical growth enables the child to function as a more separate and autonomous self, and hence to begin to collect experiences of separateness:

> The child now seems to strain away from his mother's body while being held, apparently to have a better look at her. This tangible sign of differentiation contrasts with the previous molding of the infant into mother's arms.[27]

Since the self-representation and the object-representation still exist at this point as a self-object unit (the other is experienced as part of the self) the responses of the mothering person to the hatching child are crucial and will significantly affect how the child experiences himself and those autonomous functions which are beginning to be expressed in this sub-phase. The child's need is for the mother to remain available, supportive, non-intrusive, and encouraging. Both mother and child face a challenge that is different from that of symbiosis. In supporting and encouraging the hatching child, the mother is called upon to support and affirm the child in his expression of capacities which move him away from her, those capacities which express the "otherness" of this particular child. The child's experience of "himself" as he exercises these new found abilities will be greatly affected by the mothering person's responses. The result of these interactions become organized within the psyche in the form of the developing object relations. The child who is supported in his hatching endeavors will have positive feelings attached to the developing sense of self and other, and be ready to move on to the practicing subphase.

2. Practicing

The "practicing subphase" is ushered in by rapid growth of what are called the "autonomous ego functions": capacities for mobility, perception and learning. The emergence of these capacities will be enhanced by positive experiences in the symbiotic and hatching phases, but they emerge primarily as a result of physical maturation. The practicing period is characterized by an explosion in the child's capacity to physically move away from the mothering person; first by crawling, and eventually by standing upright and walking. The child is now in a much better position to experiment with self-initiated behavior, and to learn from those experiences.

The exercise of these new capacities, representing as they do a gigantic step towards autonomy on the part of the child, generate in the child a grandiose sense of her own power and importance--the sense that she can do anything, that the world is her oyster. In terms of our metaphor of the mountain climber, it is as if the climber has arrived at a plateau and is elated at her accomplishment, feeling now that she can accomplish anything. In this grandiose glow, part of what seems to be forgotten is just how dependent the child really continues to be on the parent.

The term "practicing" refers to the tendency of children in this subphase to exercise their new found abilities in a repetitive way, taking delight in such use. The practicing child also shows an increased interest in the wider world which she is beginning to truly explore. Such an interest is shown in her tendency to toddle off to explore the next room. However, the ongoing dependency between mother and child reveals itself in the child's return periodically to touch

base, to reassure themselves that Mom is still there, a pattern appropriately named "refueling."

Again, this subphase poses its own special challenge to both mother and child. The support needed by the child is better understood when the nature of what the child is experiencing is grasped. The "refueling" concept suggests that the child needs continuing availability and support from the mother. The mothering person needs to be available for closeness when the ongoing dependency of the child drives them back for support through closeness. Yet the initiative for this needs to come primarily from the child, and represent the child's felt need for refueling, rather then the mother's anxiety about his practicing behavior. The practicing child will look for Mom to be there when he returns, and not to force return prematurely, as well as needing the mother to "mirror" and thus confirm the excitement and enthusiasm he feels through the exercise of his new found powers. This can be difficult to do. Horner writes:

> The mother may fail to mirror the pleasure of the child in his own sense of mastery with her own pleasure, or she may fail to support his continuing real dependence upon her. She may be angry at her own sense of abandonment by the child who now moves away from her, or her own separation anxiety may be mobilized. She may also be overly relieved at this ability to function without her assistance, and may be unresponsive to his continuing needs . . . To the extent that the mother is able to respond empathically to the child from the start, she is likely now to respond empathically to either his autonomous strivings or his need for support.[28]

Whatever the pattern of interaction is, the self-experience will be organized in relation to the object-experience and those patterns

maintained in the form of the developing self- and object-representations.

As the child engages in behaviors which are characteristic of the practicing period, he will have more frequent experiences of separateness. Such experiences lead to greater differentiation of the self- and object-representations. The cumulative effect of these experiences leads to the child's sudden awareness that he is separate from that on which he depends. This awareness leads to the collapse of the grandiosity associated with practicing, and creates the "crisis" that is called "rapprochement."

3. Rapprochement

In talking about the ramifications of the rapprochement subphase with clients, I often ask them to remember the way cartoon characters who are being pursued will sometimes run off the edge of a building or a cliff. The runner continues merrily along, running on nothing but air for a number of steps, and then, invariably, looks down. As soon as he discovers there is nothing there to support him, he falls.

The experience of the child in the rapprochement subphase is determined by his developing awareness that the object he continues to depend on is also the object that he is separate from (he looks down). This increased awareness of separateness is brought about by the child's developing capacity to have an increasing number of experiences in which he moves away from the mother, but also to remember and learn from such experiences. As a result, the omnipotent child of the practicing period is suddenly confronted by a reality which challenges his omnipotence. Realizing his separateness from the other generates an increased awareness of his dependency upon the

other; the omnipotence shifts, and increased power and importance is now given by the child to the mother.

The child reacts to this heightened awareness of his vulnerability through a sudden resurgence of clinging and dependent behavior. Unlike the dependency of previous phases, the dependency of the rapprochement phase is ambivalent and conflicted for children. The ambivalent nature of their feelings shows up in oppositional behavior; they don't want to give up the independence of the practicing period, but reality has burst their bubble and they can't trust themselves in quite the same way. Hamilton writes:

> Closeness and distance now become conflictual. The child manifests dependency and needs for independence simultaneously . . . He often becomes quite negative, indeed. The negativism is the verbal counterpart of physical pushing away . . . He can maintain his separateness by standing still, by not obeying, by not coming when beckoned, by not snuggling, by not eating his food, by saying "No!"[29]

Another behavioral expression of the dilemma the child experiences is an increased effort to control the object. This represents an attempt to compensate for the loss of the symbiotic bond; we don't need control if the one who we depend on is experienced as an extension of ourselves. When such attempts at control fail, when the child is confronted by the otherness of the object, she may become angry and frustrated. Horner writes of the "rage expressed by the toddler of the rapprochement crisis who experiences his helplessness vis-a-vis a separate, needed, powerful, non-responding parent."[30]

Obviously, such a stormy time in the life of the child places major stresses and strains on the parent who is trying to help and support the child's growth through it. Rapprochement may not only be a crisis of sorts for the child, but for the parent/child relationship. The child's need, as in the other stages discussed, is for the mother to be empathic with, and responsive to, the unique and special struggle that this subphase represents for the child. The mother is called upon to recognize the conflicted nature of the child's feelings during rapprochement. Ideally, the mother is available for, and open to, the movement the child makes back to her, and yet equally empathic with the need of the child to express his new found autonomy in "no saying." The mothering person also needs to recognize the vulnerability of the child to feelings of shame and inadequacy generated by the loss of his grandiose sense of self.

This is difficult to do; it is particularly hard to respond with what the child wants and needs when the child herself is so conflicted about what she wants. Hamilton poignantly writes of this struggle in a manner to which any parent of a two year old can resonate:

> For parents, especially mothers, the rapprochement sub-phase holds numerous gratifications, but perhaps even more frustrations. The child may demand and reject help simultaneously. He may coerce and control the mother as an extension of himself. He may be negative and obstinate and throw tantrums. The demands on the mother are great. She is called upon to be available and yet not controlling. She must restrain the child from actual dangerous activity without being intrusive. She must encourage separation without separating. Few mothers can remain so steady, so optimally close and distant, without feeling frustration, especially when the child places mutually exclusive demands on her, even small ones-such as insisting that his shoes be pulled effortlessly onto his feet, but that he be allowed to do it himself.[31]

The mother's own intrapsychic dynamics around closeness, independence, control, and grandiosity, will have a significant impact on her responses. The pattern of interaction taking place during the rapprochement phase will continue to be worked into the developing self- and object-representations. If the mothering person is able to be supportive of, and responsive to, the genuine strivings and aspirations of the child, then self- and object-representations will continue to differentiate and move towards object constancy. When such support is not provided, then the conflicts which emerge will be preserved in the object relations unit. The rapprochement sub-phase is important not only for what it contributes to the ongoing structuring of self- and object-representations, but also because it is at this time that problems which are representative of earlier stages may first appear.

4. Object Constancy

The rapprochement crisis is the final subphase of the separation-individuation process, and, if adequately managed, is followed by the achievement of object constancy. In our mountain climbing analogy, the attainment of object constancy represents the arrival at the summit, based on successful management of the various tasks found along the way. As we have done in charting this total process, with object constancy we look for the final time at both the interpersonal (outer) and intrapsychic (inner) experience.

The twin tasks of the process we have been describing--separation (the clear differentiation of self from object) and individuation (the achievement of a stable identity sustained from inner resources)--move

towards completion in the stage of object constancy. Outwardly, the child who has attained object constancy is able to differentiate what is self--feelings, thoughts, behaviors, etc.--from what is other. She is able to experience separateness without undue depression, anxiety, and defensiveness, and to continue to feel good about herself in the face of separation from significant others. Further, she is able to stay related to others, and feel predominantly positive about them, even when frustrated or disappointed by them.

These interpersonal capacities are the outer expression of the internal state of object relations, as they have developed during the first three years of life. With the achievement of object constancy, self- and object-representations have differentiated themselves from each other; split-off good and bad self- and object-representations have been integrated into a single object-representation with a preponderance of good feelings connected to it, and a single self-representation, also with a preponderance of good feelings, allowing the experience of ambivalence to be manageable; the genuine capacities of the child have been organized within the self-representation, charged with good feeling, and are available to be utilized by the child for the accomplishment of genuine goals in the real world; and a variety of functions that were originally maternal in nature have been incorporated into the self-representation. The child is now able to "hold a steady image of the object, especially the mother, whether she is present or absent, gratifying or depriving,"[33] and to "recognize and tolerate loving and hostile feelings toward the same object."[34] With the achievement of object constancy, the psychological self has been born out of a process that

is both interpersonal and intrapsychic. The vicissitudes of the child's journey, however, are not forgotten; rather, they are preserved within the psyche in the form of self- and object-representations, and will have a significant effect on the child's experience of both self and other in the future. At the same time, it is a mistake to see object relations theory as suggesting that all is determined by the time the child is three. The state of object relations as they have emerged over the first three years of life, will both impact, and be impacted by, future events and experiences throughout the life cycle. The more object constancy has been achieved, the more open the developing person will be to new events in reality. The more conflicted these early experiences have been, the less object constancy has been achieved, the more the developing person will impose on other persons, and reality in general, the experiences of self and other that were laid down in these earliest self/other experiences. Hamilton concludes:

> Issues of learning who we are as separate individuals in relation to other individuals must next be negotiated in terms of the important Oedipal conflict. Again, in latency, adolescence, and especially when leaving home during young adulthood, these issues need to be reworked. Separation and identity concerns return when we marry, when we have children, when our children traverse their own developmental stages, when we leave old jobs and take new ones, when we move to a different town, when our children leave us for their own careers, when we suffer illness, when we prepare for retirement, when we face the loss of our spouse or other loved one, and when we prepare for our own death. If we are fortunate we spend a lifetime developing an increasing complex and integrated sense of ourselves in relation to other people.[35]

F. Summary

This chapter has laid out the essential concepts of object relations theory, and indicated how those concepts can be used to explain how we develop an internal sense of self and other through a process of separation-individuation. The research of Margaret Mahler has been used to show how this overall process can be broken down into a series of developmental subphases. I have indicated the nature of the challenge that each subphase poses to the relationship between individuals and their significant care-taking other. Finally, I have tried to demonstrate that the way these challenges are met--the "solution" arrived at to the "problem" posed to the developing self within the subphase--is preserved in the form of self- and object-representations.

As we have tracked the infant engaged in this process, I have focused on the child's experience of self and other, of internal and external reality, of that which is "given" to the child in experience, and that which the child "creates" out of that experience. However, object relations theory also describes an "intermediate area of experience, unchallenged in respect of its belonging to internal or external (shared) reality, that constitutes the greater part of the infant's experience . . .,"[36] an area called "transitional space." The concept of transitional space becomes important both in the attempt to integrate object relations theory with a theological perspective, and in the application of this theory to the practice of pastoral care. We now turn to a fuller explanation of "transitional space" and the "transitional object."

Footnotes to Chapter 2

1. Thomas J. Paolino, Jr., Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy: Theory, Technique, Therapeutic Relationship and Treatability (New York: Brunner/Mazel, Inc., 1981), 16.

2. Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language (New York: The World Publishing Co., 1966), 925.

3. Paolino, 16.

4. Ibid., 17.

5. James F. Masterson, The Real Self: A Developmental, Self, and Object Relations Approach (New York: Brunner/Mazel, Inc., 1985), 27.

6. Ibid., 27.

7. This list compiled from the work of Horner, Masterson, Hamilton, and Blanck and Blanck (see Bibliography).

8. Althea Horner, Object Relations and the Developing Ego in Therapy (New York: Jason Aronson, 1970), 16.

9. Althea Horner, Being and Loving (New Jersey: Jason Aronson, 1986), 14.

10. McDargh, 121.

11. Horner, Object Relations, 10-11.

12. N. Gregory Hamilton, Self and Others: Object Relations Theory in Practice (New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc., 1988), 3.

13. Horner, Object Relations, 4.

14. See Hamilton, 5-7.

15. Pine, 31.

16. Hamilton, 10.

17. Ibid., 13.

18. Horner, Object Relations, 3.

19. See Ibid., 41-46.

20. Hamilton, 38.

21. The term "maternal matrix" used extensively in Horner's work, should not be taken to mean the primary "other" is always the child's mother. As I have tried to indicate earlier, this significant other

is the primary parenting other to whom the infant is most strongly attached. Since historically, the child's mother has been the one to take on this role, much of the literature uses "mother" or "maternal" to describe the function such a person is performing. This is especially true of Winnicott's work, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

22. Ibid., 15.

23. Horner, Object Relations, 31.

24. Ibid., 30.

25. Hamilton, 15.

26. Mahler writes that "the intrapsychic process of separation-individuation has two intertwined, but not always commensurate or proportionately progressing, developmental tracks. One is the track of individuation, the evolution of intrapsychic autonomy, perception, memory, cognition, reality testing; the other is the intrapsychic developmental track of separation that runs along differentiation, distancing, boundary formation, and disengagement from mother. All of these structuralization processes will eventually culminate in internalized self-representations, as distinct from internal object-representation." Mahler, 63.

27. Hamilton, 41.

28. Horner, Object Relations, 100.

29. Hamilton, 46.

30. Horner, Object Relations, 129.

31. Hamilton, 51.

32. Horner, Object Relations, 134.

33. Hamilton, 53.

34. Horner, Object Relations, 35.

35. Hamilton, 56.

36. D.W. Winnicott, Playing and Reality (New York: Tavicstock Publications, 1971) 2 and 14.

Chapter 3

THE TRANSITIONAL OBJECT

> . . . the third part of the life of a human being, a part that we cannot ignore, is an intermediate area of experiencing, to which inner reality and external life both contribute. It is an area that is not challenged, because no claim is made on its behalf except that it shall exist as a resting place for the individual engaged in the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separated yet interrelated . . . This intermediate area of experience, unchallenged in respect of its belonging to inner or external (shared) realty, constitutes the greater part of the infant's experience, and throughout life is retained in the intense experiencing that belong to the arts and to religion and to imaginative living. . .[1]

D.W. Winnicott (1896-1971) was a British psychoanalyst who played a significant role in the development of object relations theory. The distinctiveness of his ideas stem in part from the vantage point from which he made his observations. He was a pediatrician, as well as an analyst, and subsequently brought to his analytic practice questions and insights derived from observing and interacting with children and their parents during the earliest years of life. This had a profound effect on the way he understood and utilized the theory and technique of classical analysis. Where Freud directed attention to the impact of intrapsychic drives on development, Winnicott's concern was with the importance of the interpersonal environment; where Freud emphasized the importance of the father, Winnicott focused almost exclusively on the significance of the mother; where Freud was

concerned with the struggle of the child to adapt to reality, Winnicott was preoccupied with the child's need to live creatively.

Winnicott's own creativity and originality are demonstrated in his capacity to put into words and to develop experience-near concepts that described what was occurring in the mother-child dyads he observed. Among the phenomena that attracted his attention was the special kind of relationship that often developed between infants and some special object in their environment. This object might be a piece of cloth, a stuffed animal, or some toy. Winnicott observed that this particular object took on a special meaning for the child that set it apart from the other objects the child played with. He also noted that parents who were sensitive to the needs of the child, recognized and respected this special relationship. He eventually came to call this object the "transitional object" and it became his most original contribution to psychoanalytic theory.[2] The capacity to create transitional objects is a developmental capacity that emerges within the child out of interaction with a primary parenting person,[3] and is viewed by Winnicott as the capacity in infancy which forms the basis for creativity in the adult. To fully understand this concept, the reader needs to understand the view of child development that informed it.

A fundamental concern of Winnicott's was the way the children related themselves to reality--the sense of subjective self in relationship to the sense of objective reality. Winnicott believed that there are two fundamental ways we relate to the real world. One involves a conforming, compliant stance, in which reality is experienced as limiting, restrictive, and demanding, and leads to

behavior which is either submissive or rebellious, characterized by feelings of anger, depression, and unrealness. The other stance involves a sense that reality is somehow open to, and supportive of, genuine expressions of self, and leads to spontaneous, creative, and playful activity, characterized by a feeling of aliveness, joy, and well-being. This latter state represents the emergence of what Winnicott calls the "True Self" (it expresses the person's unique and distinctive being) while the former represents the emergence of a defensive "False Self" (it expresses reactions to the needs and expectations of others). Winnicott writes that "the spontaneous gesture is the True Self in action. Only the True Self can be creative and only the True Self can feel real."[4]

However, the "True Self" is present at birth only in a highly undeveloped form, and its development is profoundly dependent on the nature of the early interactional processes taking place between the child and a primary significant other, usually the mother. Winnicott defines what this interaction looks like as follows:

> Periodically, the infant's gesture gives expression to a spontaneous impulse; the source of the gesture is the True Self, and the gesture indicates the existence of a potential True Self . . . The good-enough mother meets the omnipotence of the infant and to some extent makes sense of it. She does this repeatedly. A True Self begins to have life, through the strength given to the infant's weak ego by the mother's implementation of the infant's omnipotent expressions. The mother who is not good enough is not able to implement the infant's omnipotence, and she repeatedly fails to meet the infant's gesture; instead, she substitutes her own gesture which is given sense by the compliance of the infant. This compliance of the infant is the earliest stage of the False self, and belongs to the mother's inability to sense her infant's needs.[5]

This quotation contains a number of the terms that Winnicott used repeatedly to explain the interactional process going on between mother and child: True Self, False Self, good-enough mother, omnipotence, creativity, and compliance. He looked to that process to understand the child's developing awareness of inner and outer, self and other, real and subjective, and the capacity of the child to "create" transitional objects.

The "omnipotence" of the infant is an expression of age appropriate failure to distinguish between reality and subjectivity, between internal thought and feeling (or wish), and external object and event. The "spontaneous gesture" is expressive of the omnipotent self. If the primary parenting person has been able to adapt adequately to the child's needs, and can respond to and support such a gesture, then the "True Self" is nurtured and grows, and the child's sense of himself as whole and alive is supported. The term "good enough" is applied to the parent who is able to adapt to the child's needs in this way. On that basis, the child is able to tolerate those confrontations with reality (including the reality of the parent) which over time frustrate and disappoint, and lead eventually to the abandonment of this primary omnipotence without undue loss of self-esteem. If the mother, for whatever reason, is unable to do this, and continually communicates her need to have the child respond to her rather than responding to the need of the child, then the "True Self" is weakened and the child defends himself through the development of a compliant, reactive "False Self." This interactional process not only affects the growth of the self, but just as

significantly affects the manner in which that self comes to feel related to reality. Winnicott states this clearly when he writes:

> The infant begins to believe in external reality which appears and behaves as if by magic (because of the mother's relatively successful adaptation to the infant's gestures and needs,) and which acts in a way that does not clash with the infant's omnipotence. The True Self has a spontaneity, and this has been joined up with the world's events. The infant can now begin to enjoy the illusion of omnipotent creating and controlling, and then can gradually come to recognize the illusory element, the fact of playing and imagining. Here is the basis for the symbol, which at first is both the infant's spontaneity or hallucination, and also the external object created and ultimately cathected. In between the infant and the object is something, or some activity or sensation.[6]

The "in-between" that Winnicott makes reference to here he calls "transitional space"--that area within which transitional phenomena emerge. Transitional space emerges out of the interaction of mother and child as described above, and is an "intermediate area of experiencing, to which inner reality and external life both contribute."[7] In turning his attention in this direction, Winnicott acknowledges that he is examining an area that normally occupies the attention of philosphers and theologians, but insists that this "cannot be outside the range of those whose concern is the magic of imaginative and creative living."[8] Transitional space and the utilization of transitional objects are for Winnicott the necessary prerequisites for engaging life in a creative and imaginative fashion.

Winnicott offers the following as a scenario of the manner in which transitional space develops:

> . . . at some theoretical point early in the development of every human individual an infant in a certain setting

> provided by the mother is capable of conceiving of the idea of something that will meet the growing need that arises out of instinctual tension. The infant cannot be said to know at first what is to be created. At this point in time, the mother presents herself . . . In the ordinary way she gives her breast and her potential feeding urge. The mother's adaptation to the infant's needs, when good enough, gives the infant the illusion that there is an external reality that corresponds to the infant's capacity to create. In other words, there is an overlap between what the mother supplies and what the child might conceive of.[9]

Because of the mother's empathic adaptation to the child's needs, what the child creates in imagination is experienced as being there in reality; reality is then experienced as supportive and responsive to the child's creativity. This experience creates transitional space within which transitional object formation can occur, and the child acquires the capacity for "transitional relatedness."

In one of the most extensive, thought provoking, and clinically relevant explorations of transitional object formation, Paul Horton defines "transitional relatedness" as follows:

> Transitional relatedness is defined as the person's unique experience of an object, whether animate or inanimate, tangible or intangible, in a reliably soothing manner based on the object's associative or symbolic connection with an abiding, mainly maternal primary process presence. Characteristically and in health, this relationship facilitates engagement with novel, conflictual, even frightening circumstances and mediates or catalyzes psychological growth. To this must be added, that, for most people, transitional relatedness is a developmental line-that is, a growth process and a series of changes, often lifelong. It is influenced by experience and arises out of the interaction of elements provided through maturation and in response to the influences and attitudes of the environment.[10]

There are five aspects to this understanding of transitional relatedness, all of which are explored in greater depth in Horton's book, Solace-The Missing Dimension in Psychiatry. First, transitional relatedness is seen as a developmentally achieved capacity of the self; secondly, this capacity can be used to give special meaning to both tangible and intangible "objects;" thirdly, once these objects are given such meaning, they function to support the ongoing growth and development of the self; fourthly, the primary function performed is that of providing "soothing" for the child and "solace" for the adult; and, finally, this capacity for transitional relatedness is exercised throughout the human life cycle.

From this perspective, something becomes a transitional object by virtue of the meaning it has to the child and the use that child puts it to. A handkerchief, toy, blanket, or stuffed animal can become a transitional object; so too, can a word, a tune, a gesture, or a mental representation.[11]

The transitional object is originally created in response to the infant's experience of the process of separation-individuation. As indicated in the previous chapter, an understanding of this process shows that it is a stressful one, involving the gradual loss of omnipotence, and a growing awareness of the distinction between self and other, inner and outer. Winnicott describes this as the process of "disillusionment." The good-enough mother in this period fosters this process through "disillusioning" the child.[12] This creates the "strain of relating outer and inner reality"[13] and it is to cope with this strain that the child, on the basis of an earlier set of experiences with the primary parenting person, creates the

transitional object. The child's creativity, as expressed in the creation of the transitional phenomena, allows him to manage this process in a fashion that prevents it from being overwhelmingly disruptive.

> The transitional object is imbued with good mother-stuff and therefore undoes separation. Though still not a symbol representing mother, if environmental circumstances remain conducive, the object should lead to the successful use of symbolic means to bridge over the desired but physically absent object. The creation of a good transitional object is predicated on the existence of a good enough mother whose child has the creative capacity to return equilibrium into his life space by means of a benevolent illusion. Early good transitional objects can do more than open the way to symbolic, creative living in transitional space. They can also lead to an appreciation of the qualities of the objectively perceived real, outside world . . . The good transitional object can also help to enlarge the child's objectively perceived real world by serving as a trusty companion to hold on to while entering new territories . . . The new, the unknown, by itself can be frightening for the small child (and to many adults); but carrying the faithful transitional object establishes a bridge between the old and the known and the new and unknown. It helps to develop a feeling of familiarity with the unfamiliar.[14]

In other words, the transitional object has importance for two reasons: first, it serves as an indicator that the infant has developed the capacity for functioning in a creative fashion, and secondly, it helps the child to manage the process of separation-individuation in a manner that strengthens the self in its relationship with external reality. As John McDargh points out, this has ongoing importance not only for the child, but for the adult that child will ultimately become. He writes:

> Whatever it [the transitional object] is, it owes its developmental significance to the power it has to evoke for the child the sense of security associated with the

> ministrations of the "good-enough" parent. It is the protype for symbolic activity. The object is transitional in two senses: first, it is transitional in so far as it appears between the child's experience of himself in undifferentiated merger with his interpersonal world and the later experience of the parents as separate and distinct from himself. But transitional object phenomena are transitional in a second sense which does not limit its relevance to the first few years of life. It represents the transmitting from involvement with the purely inner reality to engagement with strictly external or shared reality.[15]

Winnicott and others argue that as the child grows and develops, original transitional objects (teddy bears, blankets, etc.) lose the meaning that they once had at the early points in developmental history, but that the capacity for transitional relatedness remains and expresses itself through an ongoing creative process. Transitional space is ultimately transformed into cultural space; and within that cultural space, we exercise our imagination and our creativity to develop and relate to meaningful "objects" that can nourish and sustain us in humane and growth producing ways.

By this point the reader has no doubt noted some of the obvious similarities between the way transitional phenomena function and the way the relationship with God may function in the life of the believer. With that in mind, we turn now to examine the concept of God as transitional object.

Footnotes to Chapter 3

1. D.W. Winnicott, Playing and Reality, 2 and 14.

2. McDargh, 226.

3. See Paul C. Horton, Solace: The Missing Dimension in Psychiatry (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 53.

4. D.W. Winnicott, The Maturational Process and the Facilitating Environment (New York: International University Press, 1965), 148.

5. Ibid., 145.

6. Ibid., 146.

7. Winnicott, Playing and Reality, 2.

8. Ibid., xi.

9. Ibid., 11-12.

10. Horton, 11.

11. Ibid., 37-41.

12. Winnicott, Playing and Reality, 13.

13. Ibid., 13.

14. Simon Grolnick and Leonard Barkin (edit.), Between Reality and Fantasy (New Jersey: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1978), 51-52.

15. McDargh, 226.

Chapter 4

GOD AS TRANSITIONAL OBJECT

In 1979, Ana-Maria Rizzuto published a book entitled The Birth of the Living God in which she reported in detail the results of a study she had done on "the genesis of a person's representation of God in the course of his development and on the use of this representation by the individual during the life cycle."[1] Her conclusion was succinctly expressed in the following words: "God, psychologically speaking, is an illusory transistional object."[2] It is important that the reader understand that she is approaching God here from the psychological, rather than the theological, side of things. The word "living" in the title of her book is a reference to the psychologically real, and is not intended by her to be taken as a statement about the ontological status of the Deity.

In 1983, John McDargh, relying on the perspective that Rizzuto had so carefully laid out, published Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion: On Faith and the Image of God.[3] In that book, McDargh attempted to build on the work that Rizzuto had done earlier by using her idea of God as transistional object representation to answer the question: "How does faith operate, and within its processes what is the function of the God representation?"[4] Where Rizzuto's concern is with the overall development and functioning of the God image in human development,

McDargh focuses more on the way that image functions to support or hinder faith development.

Both Rizzuto and McDargh use the concept of God as transitional object to examine (from the human side) the relationship of the human and the Divine. What does it mean to talk about God as a transitional object? To answer that question, the reader needs to keep in mind two concepts that were explained in detail in the previous chapters: object representation and transitional object formation.

As a transitional object, the God representation shares similarities with other transitional objects, but also has significant differences. The God representation, like other transitional objects, emerges in the transitional space, and is both discovered and created there; but, unlike most other transitional objects, God is "created from representational material whose sources are the representations of primary objects."[4] In other words, where a teddy bear is an external object made up of stuffing and cloth, the God representation is constructed out of internalized object representational material, material which emerges during separation-individuation out of encounters with significant others at each stage within that developmental process. Rizzuto writes:

> . . . like the teddy bear [God] has obtained a good half of his stuffing from the primary object the child has "found" in his life. The other half of God's stuffing comes from the child's capability to "create" a God according to his needs.[5]

Such an understanding of the "stuffing" out of which the God representation is constructed becomes especially useful in pastoral

attempts to work with the God image, for it provides important clues as to where at least some of that significant "stuff" comes from. The image that emerges will be the result of the child's creative use of the material available, and the particular needs of the child at that time in her life. God is both "created" and "found." Two questions then becomes critical when, as pastors, we seek to unpack these images later in life: what material was available; and what particular needs did the child have at the time that this image emerged? Both shape the image that ultimately develops.

A further characteristic of the God representation is that it takes on increased meaning for the child at a point in time when other transitional objects tend to lose meaning, and continues to have the potential for usefulness throughout the entire life cycle. Rizzuto writes:

> Instead of losing meaning, God's meaning becomes heightened by the oedipal experience and all other pregenital events that have contributed to the reelaboration of his representational characteristics . . . It is this characteristic of always being there for love, cold disdain, mistreatment, fear, hatred, or any other human emotion that lends the object God its psychic usefulness. This psychic usefulness is at the service of protecting the minimum amount of relatedness to primary objects and a baseline of self respect and obscure hope through common . . . maneuvers . . . In summary, then, throughout life God remains a transitional object at the service of gaining leverage with oneself, with others, and with life itself.[6]

Hence, the relationship with God as transitional object remains throughout life a potential resource ideally available to promote the development of self, and the relatedness of that self to others.

Particularly at times of stress, such a God is turned to to find solace and support.

McDargh develops this understanding of how the God representation can function during the life cycle by focusing specifically on the dynamics of faith. He argues that the object-representation of God is uniquely suited to support and sustain the development of the faith that underlies what he calls "self-becoming,"[7] what I have been talking about as the development of a healthy self. He defines faith as "that human dynamic of trusting, relying upon, and reposing confidence in, which (1) is foundational to the life long process of becoming a self, and (2) is fulfilled in the progressively enlarged capacity of that self for love and self-commitment."[8]

McDargh argues that the internalized image of God functions to support and sustain such a faith, and writes:

> It is of the nature of faith as self-becoming that this activity of trust and reliance, always involves a sense of being in relationship to some center or centers of meaning and value, represented to the individual psychologically at multiple levels of cognition and awareness, and originating developmentally in the process of internalization whereby an inner representational world is constructed. This relationship must be adequate to sustain the individual as a self before the limit conditions of human existence - the fact of ultimate dependency, contingency, and finitude. The relationship must also accommodate the conatus of the self towards a deeper and richer sense of the real. For both reasons the process of development is towards faith that has as its object the transcendent.[9]

As both Rizzuto and McDargh point out and clearly illustrate with clinical material, object-representations of God can be developed which undermine faith and work against the growth and development of

the self. It is not the presence of the God representation that is crucial here--it is the "nature" of the God represented.

A third characteristic of the God representation is that the "psychic process of creating and finding God - the personalized representational transitional object - never ceases in the course of a human life."[10] In other words, God not only remains available at some level throughout the life cycle as described above; but the God representation is open to modification during that same life cycle, as new circumstances arise in the life of the self. As object-representation, the condition of the God representation is linked to the condition of the self-representation and vice-versa. We are again looking at the seesaw effect as discussed in the first chapter; a change on one end effects a change on the other; our image of God is tied to our image of self. Rizzuto summarizes when she writes:

> It is a central thesis of this book that no child in the Western world brought up in ordinary circumstances completes the Oedipal cycle without forming at least a rudimentary God representation, which he may use for belief or not. The rest of developmental life may leave that representation untouched as the individual continues to revise parent and self-representations during the life cycle. If the God representation is not revised to keep pace with changes in self-representation, it soon becomes asynchronous and is experienced as ridiculous or irrelevant or, on the contrary, threatening or dangerous. Each epigenetic phenomenon offers a new opportunity to revise the representation or leave it unchanged. Each new life crisis or landmark-illness, death, promotions, falling in love, birth of children, catastrophes, wars, and so on-provides similar opportunities.[11]

This point is crucial for pastoral work, for it affirms that the image of God the parishoner brings is not static and fixed, but is

open to modification in light of current events, experiences, and relationships. However, it also makes clear the complex nature of this side of pastoral work.

A final characteristic of God as transitional object representation, is that unlike teddy bears and fuzzy blankets, God has a special place in our culture. The child quickly becomes aware that the attitude of adults towards this object is different then it is towards others; adults believe in it to, and will often actively support and encourage the child's belief. Thus, the God representation in endowed with a special status that other transitional objects are not granted by the significant others in the child's environment.

In summation then, we look at God as transitional object-representation to try to gain access to those powerful images of God which we carry within ourselves, and which shape both our being and our becoming. By bringing together an understanding of object relations theory, the process of separation-individuation, and transitional object development, we have a set of conceptual and clinical tools that allows pastoral persons to get on with the task of "taking on the Gods."[12]

Footnotes to Chapter 4

1. Ana-Maria Rizzuto, The Birth of the Living God (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), viii.

2. Ibid., 177.

3. McDargh, 148.

4. Rizzuto, 178.

5. Ibid., 179.

6. Ibid., 179.

7. See McDargh, 73-96.

8. Ibid., 71.

9. Ibid., 113.

10. Rizzuto, 179.

11. Ibid., 200.

12. Merle Jordan, Taking on the Gods: The Task of the Pastoral Counselor (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986).

Chapter 5

THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

The prior three chapters have relied on psychoanalytic theory to explore how the image of God develops within the human psyche. While pastors need to rely on psychology to understand the workings of the psyche, they bring to the work of pastoral care rich theological resources which will also inform their work if it is to have pastoral integrity. Therefore, this chapter seeks to explore the central concept under investigation, the image of God, from the vantage point of theology. This exploration will take place in three parts. First, I will offer a personal perspective, describing how theological questions have emerged out of the clinical work I have been doing, and suggesting some tentative answers to those questions. Secondly, I will present the ideas of Gordon Kaufman as a representative of that particular theological perspective called imaginative, or metaphorical, theology. Thirdly, I will offer a comparison/integration of Kaufman's theological position with that of Rizzuto's objective relations perspective. In this final step, I will indicate why I believe that such an integrated perspective equips the pastoral care provider with essential tools for ministry.

A. A Personal Point of View

As a student in a Clinical Pastoral Education training program, I was required to write what were called "critical incident reports." In these reports, I chose something experienced during the week that had particular meaning to me, and examined its broader meanings and the possible theological significance contained within the event.[1] Its "critical" nature had to do with the meanings extracted from it that pointed beyond itself. Following such an approach, this section begins with a discussion of a "critical incident."

The "incident" is really a "moment" within a longer term therapy process (although it can happen in other interpersonal contexts). Having experienced such a "moment" both as therapist and as client, it has significant existential meaning to me. A written description of what the moment is like does not do justice to the full experience, but I will describe it as clearly as possible.

For a person in a long term therapeutic process, the therapist obviously takes on significant meaning to them, and a high degree of dependence develops. The particular kind of dependence I am focusing on here is expressed in clients' awareness that they have come to rely on the relationship with the therapist for "something" that is critical to their on-going growth and development as persons. This awareness is not something that is there for them at the start of therapy, but rather something that develops over time. Simultaneously, over time, clients move towards the awareness of another dimension of their experience with the therapist: a lack of control, or "powerlessness," over the person of the therapist. The "critical moment" comes in the process when the client simultaneously

experiences both their dependence on, and their lack of control over, the therapist.

In this moment, the client is in touch with a "reality" that he might wish to deny, but the acceptance of which is a critical step towards growth and wholeness. This reality stems from the fact that our capacity for growth as selves is grounded in our relatedness to other selves, and that we do not have power or control over those others we depend on. The motivation to deny or defend against this comes from our tendency to experience feelings of anxiety and inadequacy as a result of our awareness of it. This dependence may diminish our self-esteem (we are not all sufficient unto ourselves) and our lack of control over the other may increase our anxiety (we are not powerful enough to control those whom we depend on). Such feelings may be especially intense in the therapeutic relationship, where there is a basic inequality--the therapist does not depend on the client the way the client depends on the therapist. The therapist-client relationship will be closer in the dynamic and felt realities it surfaces to the early parent/child experience than, for example, the issues of dependence and power that emerge between two adults (say husband and wife).

Again, the point I want to emphasize is that it is the simultaneous experience of both the dependence on, and the lack of control over, the therapist that is the critical moment. Prior to this, the dependence can be experienced as "acceptable" through the denial of the lack of control; the lack of control is experienced as "acceptable" through the denial or masking of the dependence. Growth of self lies in growing through the crisis that is brought on by the

simultaneous experience (in relationship to an "other") of both as "real."

The key to the resolution of this crisis in therapy lies in the capacity of therapist and client to be in a relationship where the therapist can be trusted to be genuinely interested and invested in the growth and development of the client. That trust is based on experiencing the therapist (at least enough of the time) as consistent, dependable, capable, caring, and genuinely concerned about the growth and well-being of the client.[2] Such trust is not something that is simply given to the therapist but must be earned through the longer term therapeutic process. It is the presence of this trust that enables the client to enter into the critical moment I have described above, and it is this trust that carries the client through the ensuing crisis and enables her to emerge from it in a more integrated way.

I want to move now from a description of what I have called a "critical incident" encountered within a therapeutic process, to explore what I take to be its theological implications--to suggest how it might be seen as revelatory of the Divine-human encounter. In doing this, I am making a move from the "facts" of the therapy relationship to the ultimate meanings I affirm in faith that these "facts" point to.

Theology is an attempt to offer, from a faith perspective, a way of understanding and imaging the relationship between God and persons. The key word here is relationship; words about God that are disconnected from their meaning for persons have little significance for humankind. As we define God in relationship to us, we also define

ourselves. Theology, as I understand it, seeks to throw some light on aspects of our experience that are revelatory of that relationship.

The incident described above is a vivid and powerful reminder that we are limited; we are dependent on an "other" to grow fully into that which we might become. Persons in therapy often experience themselves as excessively limited. Many of these limits are self-imposed and will be transcended during the course of therapy; but in their dependence on an "other" to promote their growth, the limit is not simply the expression of neurotic conflict, but rather the expression of an existential reality shared by all. The dependence here is grounded in the reality of our need to be related in order to grow.

The incident also teaches us that we are limited in another way. We do not have power and control over the other we depend on for growth. Just as with dependence, this lack of power is not something that in its existential sense will be removed by a therapeutic process. Many people in therapy are out of touch with their own power and, hopefully, the therapy will assist them in getting more fully in touch with all the power that is potentially theirs. Yet health and growth also lie in coming to terms with the reality of the limits placed on one's power over the "other" they depend on.

The ultimate dimension of these realities is pointed to in the image of God as Creator, person as creation. Such an image offers understandings of God, person, and of the quality of their relatedness. Imaging God as Creator and person as creation suggests that in an ultimate sense, we are dependent on the maintenance of a connectedness to something apart from ourselves to "become" in reality

that which we are potentially. Secondly, such an image ascribes to God a degree of "power" that we lack. In acknowledging God as Creator, we acknowledge both our lack of that power, and our dependence. Our lack of power or control over God is captured in the image of God as Absolute.[3] The implication contained in such an image is that the God we depend on to nurture us into a fullness of life (God as Creator) is also the God we image as outside our power and control (God as Absolute).

The theological dilemma such imaging creates can be stated as follows: as creation, we exist as dependent upon, yet not in control of, the Creator; acceptance of that condition enables us to be in "right" (realistic) relationship to God, and to know ourselves in a way which facilitates our growth and development towards that which we are created to be (knowing ourselves is knowing our relatedness to the other). Yet our capacity to accept this is limited because the clear perception of our created and dependent status generates shame and anxiety. Our response is more likely to be a move towards a narcissistic posture in which we seek to define our security and base our self-esteem on claiming to be more than we can realistically be.

When we look to God for help in the resolution of this dilemma, if our experience of that God is transmitted solely through the images of God as Creator and God as Absolute (images of power) then our dilemma is heightened, for the crucial issue of God's "intentionality" towards God's creation is left open. By seeming to put all the emphasis not on what we <u>are</u>, but on what we're <u>not</u> in relationship to God, and focusing on the powerless and dependent status of the creature vis-a-vis the more powerful Creator, God is imaged as

potentially against us, rather than for us, and the prospect raised not of our narcissism, but of God's. If we imagine being in a human relationship which constantly reminded us of our weaknesses and our limitations, we can readily imagine the anger and humiliation we might feel in relationship to this "other." We would deeply suspect the intention of such "others" towards us, and question if we were being used by them simply to build up and bolster their own self-esteem. We might feel we were being treated as objects, without regard for our own strivings and aspirations, valued only as we could be used to bolster the other's grandiosity. Our affective responses would likely be anger, shame, and humiliation and we could hardly allow ourselves in such a situation to trust the other enough to acknowledge whatever reality there might be in the fact of our being limited and dependent upon this "other." With the intentionality of God in question, shame and anxiety are the likely response, and such feelings and whatever reality they are a response to, will be defended against by denial and distortion.

How then is a "right" relationship between God and person possible, a relationship which I have suggested is necessary for growth to take place, and which is based on looking realistically at who we are in relationship to God? Such a relationship becomes possible when God is more than is contained in the images of God as Absolute and God as Creator. In the "critical incident" described above, I looked experientially at how the client might move from needing to be defended against a reality (about themselves in relationship to the therapist), the acceptance of which was a precondition to ongoing growth and development. I suggested that in

therapy this "crisis" is resolved because of other attributes in the client/therapist relationship. It is, I believe, these "other attributes" of God that resolve this dilemma in the God/person relationship. Those other attributes are most succinctly captured in the simple affirmation that "God is love." That phrase conditions the statements" God is Creator/God is Absolute" and significantly changes the nature of the God/person relationship. The fact that the powerful Other who created us is imaged as loving means that the intention behind the creative act, and any other use of power, is loving in its intention towards us. What it means to be loving calls for further definition, and we will use several sources, both theological and psychological, to help arrive at that definition.

When one's attitude or intention towards that which they are interacting with in a "creative" way is informed by love, then their relationship with that creation will be characterized by words such as nurturing, accepting, affirming, caring, consistent, confronting, etc.[4] They are "for" the other, and their valuing of that other is not dependent on what the other can do for them. When God is imaged in these terms, then the images of God as Creator and Absolute, and the corresponding dependence of persons upon God, can be accepted without the levels of anger, shame, and anxiety that I have referred to above (the reality of our created and dependent status can be accepted and affirmed), and a fullness of life can be actively pursued in relationship to God with an attitude of trust and confidence. I want now to briefly examine two Biblical passages from the point of view that I have just laid out.

B. Genesis 3:1-10

> The serpent was more crafty than any wild creature that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Is it true that God has forbidden you to eat from any tree in the garden?' The woman answered the serpent, 'We may eat the fruit of any tree in the garden, except for the tree in the middle of the garden; God has forbidden us either to eat or to touch the fruit of that; if we do, we shall die.' The serpent said, 'Of course you will not die. God knows that as soon as you eat it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God's knowing both good and evil.' When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good to eat, and that it was pleasing to the eye and tempting to contemplate, she took some and ate it. She also gave her husband some and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they discovered that they were naked; so they stitched fig-leaves together and made themselves loinclothes. The man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze and hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, 'Where are you?' He replied, 'I heard the sound as you were walking in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, and hid myself.'

Where the Adam and Eve story is usually presented as a story of sin and guilt, evidence of a kind of inate pridefulness on the part of persons, I am more interested in looking at how it is illustrative of the power of shame and the dynamics of self-esteem as these get wrestled with in relationship; further, I am suggesting that understanding the way God is imaged and experienced within the relationship is critical to understanding those dynamics.

I want to examine this passage from Genesis in light of what I have written earlier about the God/person relationship. In the story, we know with some clarity what Adam and Eve did. What is not as clear, and hence more open to interpretation, is why they did it. In the beginning, God is defined in relationship to persons as Creator; the image of God as Creator, person as creation, defines each in terms

of the relationship. As defined within the relationship persons (as created) have much, can do much. Yet the relationship also discloses limits; God is imaged as defining a limit.

Initially, this is not a problem; the problem that develops and eventually leads to the disruption of the relationship and the subsequent estrangement between God and persons comes about through the interpretation of the God/person relationship put forth by the serpent. The serpent images God as needing to keep that which God created down to maintain God's own power and prestige. In imaging God in these terms, the relationship is experienced in a way that engenders shame and defiance and actions occur from the human side based on those feelings and that sense of the relationship. In so doing, the relationship becomes that which it is felt to be. Adam and Eve become more preoccupied with God as limit, than with God as Creator; this distorts both their image of God and, therefore, their relationship with God. Their preoccupation with this limit--their dis-ease with the "less than"--shifts their image of God from an appreciation of God as Creator, to an image of God as over against them, as God needing to limit them. Such feelings lead them to act in ways which confirm this image (God becomes the enemy) and shame becomes the predominant affect characterizing their feelings in this previously growth promoting relationship.

The passage ends with Adam and Eve experiencing themselves as estranged from a God they image as unable to tolerate their challenge to God's power and authority. This is the situation of estrangement that they are left in, and which is addressed in the next Biblical passage.

C. Luke 19:1-10

> Entering Jericho he made his way through the city. There was a man there named Zacchaeus; he was superintendent of taxes and very rich. He was eager to see what Jesus looked like; but, being a little man, he could not see for the crowd. So he ran on ahead and climbed a sycamore tree in order to see him, for he was to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, be quick and come down; I must come and stay with you today." He climbed down as fast as he could and welcomed him gladly. At this, there was a general murmur of disapproval. "He has gone in," they said, "to be the guest of a sinner." But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Here and now, sir, I give half of my possessions to charity; and if I have cheated anyone, I am ready to repay him four times over." Jesus said to him, "Salvation has come to this house today! For this man too is a son of Abraham, and the Son of Man has come to seek and save the lost."

I perceive the story above as a Biblical critical incident report; it is a story that points to ultimate meanings. Zacchaeus is a person who is obviously successful in many ways; but just as obviously, he is hurting badly. His "hurt" seems to be connected to the fact that he is perceived in negative terms by others--as outcast, or sinner. Obviously, Zacchaeus has contributed to his being seen this way by some of the choices he has made, and it is plausible that the way Zacchaeus is seen by others reflects his inner sense of himself. Zacchaeus is described as a "little man." Clearly, he is physically small; but does "little" also refer to his way of being in the world, his inner sense of identity, and his relationships with others? Has he spent his life experiencing his "smallness," and feeling that he was doomed to be looked down on because of it? Does his apparent preoccupation with money represent an attempt to have

control over something (in the absence of his being able to control the responses of other people) that would increase his stature, and give him good feelings about himself?

These questions, of course, can't be answered with certainty. Yet the image of the hurt and rejected Zacchaeus up in the tree suggests his inner sense of isolation and alienation. That same image, combined with his straining to catch a glimpse of Jesus, also suggests the depth of his hope for something new, and his wish to make even visual contact with an "other." In giving expression to this hope in the manner he does, Zacchaeus acknowledges his dependence on something outside himself, something that he cannot control; and, despite past injuries, he reaches out from his awareness.

Jesus, in his affirming and accepting response to Zacchaeus, offers him a quality of relatedness that goes beyond visual contact. He notices him, he responds to him, he says, in a sense, "you are important to me" ("I must come and stay with you today"). The experience of acknowledging his vulnerability to an accepting and affirming other, has a transformative effect on Zacchaeus. He grows, and his growth appears to be in the direction of becoming a less isolated, defended, and ego-centric self. Jesus' words at the end suggest that what has happened help to clarify what salvation means and illustrate the seeking and saving purpose of his work. Where the Adam and Eve story ends with relationship in estrangement, the Zacchaeus story ends with reconciliation.

Clearly, what I have presented here represents my own reflections on the Zacchaeus story. I believe that this is only one of many Biblical stories which illustrate how God is involved in the

transformation of the self towards becoming a self more representative of what persons were created by God to be. This truer self is usually characterized by its greater capacity to love and to care, to trust, to be related to others, to take responsibility for oneself and one's action, to be reality related, and to be creative. This story, and others like it, illustrate how we move towards such authentic selfhood, through being related to an "other" outside ourselves, an other that connects us in some way to the love and the care and the nurturing of God that is there for us. The Gospel stories not only talk about this process in some abstract way, but, in a series of critical incidents, illustrate it at work. The words and the work of Jesus, emphasize again and again that God is more than Creator and more that Absolute; the Gospels portray Jesus again and again entering into relationships with people in which they experience themselves as valued, accepted, and understood. My faith is that in and through such events we catch a deeper glimpse of our relationship with the Ultimate source of meaning that we call God.

D. Imaginative Theology

> Some images and ideas of God are exceedingly dangerous, destructive of human life and the possibility of developing creative and productive selves and communities. Just what one means when one uses the word 'God', thus, is far from a matter of indifference. The meaning of devotion to God and of peace with God will depend very much on the idea or image one has of God and what it is believed God requires of us; likewise, the question whether one's feelings of alienation, self-hatred and guilt will separate one from God, or whether the relation to God will prove the basis for dealing creatively with these destructive feelings and attitudes, will depend very much on the conception of God one holds. It is therefore of the greatest importance to formulate and

> use the symbol of God critically and with care. The task of theology, as I understand it, is to think through and make explicit the criteria for an adequate understanding of God and then to reconstruct traditional images and ideas on the basis of these criteria, so that God will be grasped in faith and life in significant creative relationship to our actual experience.[5]

This quotation lies at the heart of the writing of Gordon Kaufmann, who, in a series of books and articles, has addressed what he considers to be the essential theological issue -- construction of personal and group images of God. The total body of his work affirms such construction as the central theological task, invites the reader to actively engage in such work, and suggests a methodology for its undertaking. In what follows, I will lay out the basic premises of Kaufmann's theological position.

1) God is never known in terms of "God's-self," but rather is known and related to in and through the images of God that human beings construct. It is crucial that we recognize the human and constructive quality of our God language, because only such recognition keeps the words we use about God in perspective as limited and finite, rather than fixed and absolute. Kaufmann emphasizes this element of human creativity in the construction of the image of God when he writes:

> Whether in prayer or sermon, biblical exposition or theological analysis, use of the word 'God' involves important imaginative and constructive activity that is often not recognized. God is not a reality immediately available in our experience for observation, introspection, and description, and speech about or to God therefore is never directly referential. Thus, we are unable to check our concepts and images of God for accuracy and adequacy through direct confrontation with the reality "God," as we can with most ordinary objects of perception and experience.

> Instead, our awareness and understanding here is gained entirely in and through images and concepts themselves, constructed into and focused by the mind into a center for the self's devotion and service.[6]

2) The creation of the God image is the work of what Kaufmann calls the "theological imagination." In discussing the theological imagination, Kaufmann does essentially what Freud did in positing the existence of the ego: for the sake of conceptual clarity, he gives us a human attribute that can only be known in terms of its functioning. The theological imagination is where image construction takes place, where we take aspects of our experience and create images of God which can give meaning and value to our lives. The material drawn upon for such construction is the lived experience of each person, particularly interpersonal experience. Kaufmann insists that "all speech to and about God, and all 'experience of God,' is made possible by and is a function of the constructive powers of the imagination."[7]

The "constructive powers of the imagination" lie principally in the capacity of the imagination to work metaphorically and symbolically with what is given in human experience. Kaufmann writes:

> At best, all of the concepts and images-always drawn from our experience of the world-which we use to grasp God and to understand God will be only analogies or metaphors, symbols or models; they will never be applicable literally. The concept of God is built up in our minds by playing off one metaphor against another, by criticizing and qualifying this image through juxtaposing it with that concept, by carefully selecting finite models which will enable us to gain some sense of that which is behind and beyond everything finite but which cannot be identified directly with anything finite. Our concept of God, thus . . . will never be finished or fixed in some definitive form or definition; rather it will always be that which escapes our very definition but to which we aspire as we formulate our definitions.[8]

3) The God image is constructed in response to the underlying human need to realize one's potential as a human self. The self that can be comfortable and confident, and relate meaningfully to others in the world, is called forth, supported, and sustained by an adequate relationship with God, mediated through the image of God. "'I' and 'God,' both known to us only in image or idea, are polar realities which establish and sustain and reinforce each other . . ."[9] The construction of the image of God is a human task, "to further our humanization (which has traditionally been called our 'salvation')."[10] The adequacy of the image being advanced theologically is judged in terms of how well it functions in this role. Kaufmann's position is that human beings are created and exist as persons who can only develop fully as selves in relationship to God; and that relationship with God is grounded in our image or idea of God. The impetus to the creation of the image of God is our need to orient our lives to some center of meaning and value that is greater than ourselves. We all develop, in some form or other, such an image; whether it is truly God, whether it is adequate to support our growth and development towards a true fullness of life, depends on the capacity of that image to perform two vital functions. The adequate image of God is an image that "performs two indispensable functions for human life, what we may call a 'relativising' function and a 'humanizing function'";[11] further, "either of these two dimensions taken without the other would undermine and ultimately destroy the function and significance of God as the proper object of human devotion and service . . ."[12]

4) Human fulfillment is dependent upon the capacity of persons to transcend their own narcissism; that is, to relate themselves to something that is not simply a reflection of their own needs and desires, and under their own control. Only if God is imaged in terms as that which is transcendent and absolute can the relationship with God function in this way. God must function in this relativising fashion within the Divine-human encounter for God to be God.

Kaufmann portrays this relativising function as follows:

> What is needed to break through this curved-in character of human existence is a center of focus and meaning which can evoke from us devotion and service that draws us out of our preoccupation with ourselves and our own wishes. The image/concept of a God radically objective to us, entirely independent of all our desires and not acceptable to any remaking or reshaping in accord with our own wishes, that which we can in no way control, has traditionally performed this function. God has been a center of devotion and service which could draw selves and communities out of themselves, thus overcoming the warfare of a thousand centers each attempting to order everything in its own terms, and opening up human life to structures of order and meaning otherwise outside its reach.[13]

5) If God is to be God, then the sense of God as absolute must always be balanced by the sense of God's "concern for and active promotion of human well-being and fulfillment;"[14] what Kaufmann calls God's "humaneness:" God "relating Godself to humankind in ways which promote and enhance development and fulfillment."[15] Only when the face of God is imaged as disclosing a loving intentionality towards persons, can God be related to in love and trust; without this dimension, God's power and might becomes merely arbitrary and tyrannical, as opposed to nurturing and creative. God's humaneness is

experienced and God's power is trusted in and through the faith that God is for us.

> As an ultimate point of reference for all that is, God must also be the focus of orientation for men and women. For that to be possible he must be appropriate as relevant to our deepest human needs and as that which in fact provides fulfillment for our existence. We are living beings driven forward by vital powers within us; unless God has some significant relationship to those actual organic drives and needs, he cannot orient our lives.16

Kaufmann explores the way in which images of God as humane have been expressed historically in the parent/child images of the Old and New Testament, and writes:

> God [in the tradition] was like a thoroughly humane, just loving father, and we are the children for whom God has unlimited care, for whom God's only desire is that we reach maturity and fulfillment.[17]

The image of God as humane, qualifies the image of God as absolute, and makes possible our committment in trust to God.

6) Kaufmann acknowledges that there are differences of opinion regarding what constitutes that which is essentially human, and thus, humane; he points out that different images of God will reflect different understandings of "human nature and fulfillment."[18] For Christians, Jesus becomes a model of the human and the humane. In a powerful passage that might serve as a summary of his entire position, Kaufmann writes:

> For Christian faith Jesus Christ has had a double normative significance (Chalcedon): he provided a basis for understanding what the human truly is and how it is to corport itself, and also for understanding who God is and

> how God acts to and for humans. Thus, for Christian theology the humaneness of God was not to be understood simply or primarily in terms of our own ideas and experience of the human: Jesus provides the model on the basis of which our notions of humaness (whether God's or ours) are to be developed . . . When developed in this way, the motifs of humaness and of absoluteness in the concept of God, though remaining in a certain tension, reinforce each other instead of undercutting and threatening to destroy each other. It now becomes clear that God's . . . absoluteness cannot be identified with that tyrannical power which destroys its enemies mercilessly, nor is it to be understood as some inscrutable mystery that ultimately faces into the complete emptiness of an unknowable "X"; it is rather, that which creates, sustains, and continues to nurture humans even in the face of hostility and rejection, so as to effect their transformation and fulfillment. And God's . . . humaness is not some simple realization of our wishes and desires but rather the insistence, which we in our self-centeredness always resist, that we become transformed into beings who love and serve each other, that we become a "new humanity" characterized preeminently by such virtues as love, freedom, reconciling forgiveness and openness, and creativity.[19]

7) Finally, the task of the theologian, Kaufmann argues, is to construct images of God which will function in the manner he has laid out, but which are also relevant to the particular problems, concerns, and situations of contemporary human beings. In other words, Kaufmann has offered his view of how God "ought" to function in the life of persons; the theological task (and I would add, the pastoral task) is to work to make this possible in the contemporary world. Kaufmann challenges us to get on about this work with the following words:

> Faith in God has become impossible for many now, not so much because of their stiffnecked sinfulness and rebellion against God as because talk about God-and thus God himself-seems to have little to do with their actual lives. Unless and until this talk can be reconstructed in such a way as to make sense of major dimensions and problems and projects of contemporary experience, and God can be seen once again to be the God of this world and our God . . . it is not possible to have faith in him. Theological

> responstruction is not undertaken simply to satisfy some mere intellectual or speculative impulse; it is a demand of the life of faith itself.[20]

E. Psycho-Theological Integration

The pastor is actively engaged in promoting the encounter of the human with the Divine. While keeping this understanding of the pastoral task in mind, I intend to examine the psychological and theological positions previously laid out, looking for similarities and differences, and asking if it is possible to combine the significant insights of both into an integrated perspective available for pastoral work.

Both perspectives begin by directing our attention away from a preoccupation with God as God's self, and towards the image of God that resides in-depth within the human psyche. They move on from there to assert that this image is crucial in the Divine-human encounter; it becomes, in a sense, the mediator of such a meeting. Object relations theory argues that our relationship with the "true object" is filtered through the internalized object-representation, and, subsequently, we must attend to the shape, form, and developmental history of this representation out of concern with our relatedness to that "real object." Kaufmann would argue that in the development of our relationship to God, where the image "cannot be confirmed by reference to directly experiencable objects,"[21] we are even more dependent on the image. We encounter God in and through the image; if we are concerned with the nature of that encounter, then both psychology and theology directs our attention towards the image.

Along with directing our attention to the image, both perspectives offer complementary views supportive of a broader conception of reality which transcends the usual subject/object, internal/external, way of viewing things. Object relations theory provides this in Winnicott's view of the transitional object, which is both "created and found, outside, inside and on the border, not under magical control like an internal object, but not outside control like an external object."[22] Kaufmann engages the same issue of "reality" when he writes:

> This contention, that God is present to us fundamentally in symbol or image or idea, not in person, may seem at first somewhat shocking to believers and nonbelievers alike. For does it not suggest that God is somehow less than real? We have been taught in our culture to regard ideas and symbols-particularly those that cannot be confirmed by reference to directly experiencable objects-with suspicion as misleading or unreal. But this is unwarrented . . . It is fundamentally by means of such images and ideas that we grasp our experience and the world, and that we orient ourselves in life . . . The system of ideas and images by means of which we apprehend ourselves and our place within the world is among the most important of our possessions; we simply could not function without it as living, acting human beings.[23]

One of the most helpful tasks that object relations theory has performed for psychology, and imaginative theology for theology, is a thorough examination of the nature of the reality represented in metaphor and image.[24]

Thirdly, there is agreement regarding the significance of the relationship of this reality for the growth, development, and sustenance of the self. Both points of view see the Divine-human encounter as bringing the self into relationship to something that

ideally can support and sustain it in its movement towards a greater realization of created potential. Likewise, both perspectives support the view that if the image has this potential positive power, it can also hinder and retard growth in an equally powerful way. However, when we begin to look more closely at the needs of the developing self that are brought into the Divine-human encounter, we see some differences between the two points of view.

Kaufmann, focusing more as he does on what he considers to be the existential/ontological dilemmas of human existence that "do not arise fundamentally out of attachments between humans but rather out of the emerging consciousness of the inevitable inadequacy of all such human attachments in dealing with the deepest insecurities and helplessness of the self; i.e., its finitude,"[25] argues that the self can only emerge and develop fully in relationship to God imaged as absolute and humane. Rizzuto, focusing more on the psychological growth and development of the self-in-relationship throughout the human life cycle, and on the need of the self to "maintain a minimum amount of relatedness to primary objects and a baseline of self-respect and obscure hope . .,"[26] sees the need for a more multi-faceted image. Here, the capacity of the image to promote growth depends on the developmental needs of the self at any particular point in time. Hence, Rizzuto's conception of the image that promotes and sustains growth takes into account that as the person develops, what is needed within the relationship to support growth and development changes also. Subsequently, the availability of the image to be adapted to the particular growth needs of the self receives more attention from

Rizzuto than it does from Kaufmann because the needs of the self are seen as more idiosyncratic and concrete.

This difference, between psychological/developmental needs and ontological/existential needs has important implications for pastors working with persons to facilitate the Divine-human encounter. If being in relationship to God is going to be meaningful to persons, than that relationship must touch them in depth, in a manner which has the potential for bringing hope and healing. To have such potential, God cannot be brought in simply as an answer to fill in the blanks when limits are reached. A God so conceived will not be experienced as present in the midst of lives, but only at their outer edges; we will not bring to such a God the wholeness of who we are, but only that part of ourselves which reaches the limits of its own power and resources, and can't live with the awareness. Rizzuto's position offers what to me is a more comprehensive view of both God and the human condition. These differences are very successfully integrated in McDargh's book, where both psychological and ontological needs of the self are merged together into a picture of the total self, and the image of God is seen as related to this whole self.[27]

This discussion of how the deep needs of the self are engaged in a Divine-human encounter mediated through the image of God as supporting and sustaining the growth of that self towards the realization of created potential, leads to an examination of the nature of the image--the question of its formation and its development. What is it about the image that enable's it to touch us in our depth with such power? As we examine this question, a further difference between Kaufmann and Rizzuto emerges, a difference that has

important implications for pastoral work. The difference begins to become clearer when we distinguish the image as object-representation from the image as idea or concept.

The object-representation, as described earlier (Chapter I), emerges out of the complex interaction of self and object within a developmental process; it is a psychological construct, not just an idea arrived at as the end result of a cognitive process. It is the result of a person living something through, not just thinking something through. Because it has emerged out of the struggle of the self to become a whole self it is related to the person at all the different levels the self functions; conscious and unconscious, feeling and thinking, intrapsychic and interpersonal.

While Kaufmann is compelling in making the case for the importance of the image, the actual makeup of that image remains somewhat unclear, as does the actual functioning of the "theological imagination" which constructs it. He uses the terms "idea," "concept," and "image" interchangably, and while he identifies the development of the image as a complex process, it remains, in the end, a process that seems primarily cognitive in nature. This is indicated when he writes:

> Getting our consciousness or our ideas straight is thus an indispensable part of becoming a healthy well-functioning self, and should not be derogated as somehow less important than, say, 'getting in touch with our feelings.' As a matter of fact our feelings about ourselves are often generated by the underlying ideas and images with which we constitute ourselves.[28]

The failure to distinguish with more clinical clarity between idea and image can lead to the conclusion that working with the image

of God is primarily a cognitive process in which ideas are explored and exchanged. I believe that Kaufmann actually sees the process as a good deal more complex than that, but it is exactly at this point that the object relations perspective and the concept of the transitional object offers a way of understanding the image in a more comprehensive and pastorally useful sense.

John McDargh has addressed these same issues in a section of his book entitled the "object representation of God and the conceptualization of God."[29] McDargh defines the object-representation of God as "conscious and unconscious configurations of affect, image, and memory formed around the complex symbol 'God' and linked to patterns of self representation . . ." and points out that the object-representation of God is "absolutely idiosyncratic for every individual even as they bear the common impress of particular religious environments."[30] While having genuine appreciation for the theological perspective Kaufmann offers, McDargh argues that his perspective leaves the "religious fact unmoored from the developmental process"[31] and "the problem of dealing with the critical life issues of faith is cast as essentially an intellectual or cognitive project, a matter of the management of language and concepts."[32] He suggests that the difficulty lies in the "failure to distinguish theoretically between the processes whereby the child handles concepts and the processes whereby the child forms and relates to significant objects."[33]

The implication here, as both McDargh and Rizzuto point out, is that the idea or concept of God encountered by the person in the pew in acts of preaching or teaching does not function at the same level

as the object-representation of God that the person brings to this encounter. The pastoral care provider, in attempting to facilitate the development of a relationship with God which can meaningfully support and sustain the self in its movement toward an abundance of life, must be capable of engaging the private object-representation. When the nature of the object-representation is understood, it becomes clear that this does not happen through the offering of ideas and concepts that engage the person primarily at the level of their thinking. As McDargh puts it, change in the image is not the result of "ideas correcting ideas."[34]

In this section, I have compared and contrasted imaginative theology and object relations theory, moving towards a perspective that would integrate the views of both. Kaufmanm makes the case theologically for the importance of construction of an adequate image of God, and offers some criteria by which "adequacy" might be evaluated; Rizzuto explores in greater depth how that image develops and works psychologically, and McDargh takes some initial steps towards the integration of theological and psychological points of view with regard to the issue of the faith development. Combining these approaches provides the pastor with a tool that can lead to greater pastoral effectiveness when the image of God is being engaged in the meeting of pastor and parishoner. The following two chapters will lay out in greater detail how this tool can be used in pastoral work.

Footnotes to Chapter 5

1. For a fuller description of this process, see John Patton, From Ministry to Theology: Pastoral Action and Reflection (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990).

2. There are numerous books and articles describing how the therapist needs to be experienced by the client for change to take place. See, for example, Gerard Egan, The Skilled Helper Monterey, Cal.: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co., 1986), 67.

3. I have drawn on Kaufmann, The Theological Imagination, in my understanding of God as Absolute, as will be shown later.

4. See Milton Mayeroff, On Caring (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 13-27.

5. Kaufmann, Theological Imagination, 76.

6. Ibid., 21.

7. Ibid., 22.

8. Ibid., 268-269.

9. Ibid., 75.

10. Ibid., 264.

11. Kaufmann, Theology for a Nuclear Age, 33.

12. Ibid., 35.

13. Kaufmann, Theological Imagination, 36.

14. Ibid., 39.

15. Ibid., 270.

16. Gordon Kaufmann, An Essay on Theological Method (Chicago, Cal.: Scholars Press, 1979) 54.

17. Kaufmann, Theological Imagination, 29.

18. Ibid., 45.

19. Ibid., 46.

20. Ibid., 61.

21. Ibid., 73.

22. Rizzuto, Birth, 179-80.

23. Kaufmann, Theological Imagination, 73.

24. See McFague, Metaphorical Theology and Models of God for excellent descriptions of the use of metaphor in theological construction.

25. Kaufmann, Theological Imagination, 67.

26. Rizzuto, Birth, 79.

27. McDargh, 67-96.

28. Kaufmann, Theological Imagination, 66.

29. McDargh, 124-125.

30. Ibid., 124.

31. Ibid., 127.

32. Ibid., 127.

33. Ibid., 128.

34. Ibid., 131.

Chapter 6

CASE STUDIES

A. Introduction

This paper began with three clinical vignettes -- examples of people whose struggles surfaced questions that the theological/psychological perspective laid out in the previous four chapters seeks to explore. Now we return to these "living human documents,"[1] to see if this perspective does, in fact, provide a way of understanding in greater depth the spiritual/psychological struggle that such persons are engaged in; and, if so, can this in-depth understanding facilitate the work of pastoral care providers?

The "cases" that are offered here serve to illustrate how these theoretical concepts can be used to help understand clinical data; they are not offered as "proof" of the theory. The two histories are the actual histories of two clients that I have worked with in long term pastoral psychotherapy, with some facts changed or distorted to protect their identities. Both agreed to take a "Religious Ideation Test"[2] and to do three interviews for the specific purpose of providing information relevant to this research project apart from their therapeutic work. Statements in quotation marks are taken from either the test or the interviews.

The case material will be worked with in the following manner: A "life history" (Jane) will be presented in as descriptive a fashion as

possible, with minimal analysis or comment; this history will be followed by a section describing in more detail the particular perspective to be applied to this history; the case material will then be analyzed, using this perspective; finally, a second case (Jim) will be presented in the same descriptive fashion, followed by analysis of that case using the same perspective.

B. Jane

Jane is a 28 year old woman who I began seeing for pastoral psychotherapy when she was 20. I think of Jane as a survivor. This pattern of surviving began at the early age of two, when, after nearly dying, she was diagnosed as having diabetes. Her condition obviously had a significant impact on what up to that point had been a fairly close relationship with her mother, a caring but somewhat rigid and controlling person.

Jane believes that her mother felt scared, guilty, and responsible in some way for the diabetes. Her mother's religious views may have intensified such feelings. She describes her mother's view of her relationship with God in the following words:

"I believe she felt God loved her as long as she 'performed right' and because she felt she performed right, God was on her side and it gave her the 'right' to dictate to others what they should do. On the other side, I think that she felt she was to blame because God didn't change her husband. She seemed to have a strong faith, but it seemed based on performance and the ability to change others, see things her way."

Her mother was told by the doctor that Jane would not live past the age of ten, information that was passed on to Jane. Her mother's

anxious need to manage the diabetes lead to power struggles around control of Jane's diet. While Jane happily remembers sitting on her mother's lap and being read to from the Bible, she also has recollections of having to stay at the table after everyone else had left because she had not eaten all her food. Another set of feelings developing between Jane and her mother revolved around testing the sugar level in Jane's urine. From watching her mother's face when she did this, Jane came to realize that certain colors were "good" and other colors were "bad."

Jane did not have significant relationships with other family members during her earliest years. She had two older sisters, but when she was born, they were already in their teens. Her father was in sales, and was experienced by Jane as passive, ineffectual, and uninvolved. When she was five he lost his job, and went into a depression. In the "take charge" manner that Jane described as typical, her mother took the initiative in moving the family to another state; after the move her father's depressed condition improved.

It is after this move that Jane first remembers attending church, something the whole family did at her mother's initiative. Jane got positive attention from adults in the church, especially one man who was a Deacon, and seemed to be "happy a lot." She remembers asking this man a question about the 23rd Psalm in which she took the phrase "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want" to mean you weren't supposed to want the Lord to be your shepherd. What stands out in Jane's mind, is that the Deacon took time to explain that this really meant the Lord would supply your wants. She enjoyed Sunday school,

and her view of God at that time was of a loving God who could do anything, and would take care of her.

This was a time in Jane's life when she became more outgoing, made friends outside the home, emerged as a kind of leader among the neighborhood kids, and was chosen as the mascot for a high school sports team. She felt good about herself, functioned in a self-assertive fashion, and successfully elicited a good deal of positive attention.

When Jane was six, her mother died from a stroke with no prior warning. She remembers vividly the day this happened: her mother not coming to wake her up as she normally did, feeling afraid, going downstairs, no one saying anything and her being afraid to ask. Her father is crying, and then the doctor calls her in and tells her that her mother has "passed away," and she doesn't know exactly what that means but she starts to cry also. She is told by an Aunt that God "needed her mother in heaven," and that she is better off now.

Jane missed her mother terribly, felt very alone and cried herself to sleep at night. No one in her family was available to help her with the feelings and thoughts that she struggled with. When she would feel alone, she would talk to God, and ask God to show her her mother; she knew her mother couldn't come back and stay, but she wanted very much to just see her once more. Her mother had taught her that if she tried hard enough and did it right, God would make it happen; if it didn't, you weren't doing enough. When God didn't answer her prayers, she felt betrayed and angry and stopped praying. Her father continued to take her to church, but it felt different to

her now. She became withdrawn, and spent a great deal of time passively watching T.V.

Her father took over the management of her diabetes. She cried a lot when her father gave her her shots, and she sensed that her father hated doing it. She felt that her father couldn't handle her being upset. When she was seven, her father remarried. Jane was happy at the thought that she would be getting a new Mom, who she expected would be like her old one. The family moved to a bigger house in a better neighborhood. Very quickly, her stepmother assumed a dominant role in the family, especially in relationship to Jane. She took over the management of her diabetes, and attempted to set limits on her television watching.

When she was nine, Jane was sent by her parents to a camp for diabetics. She hated the camp, feeling that she was the only one there who didn't know how to take care of herself. She had to stand in line to have her insulin shots given to her, while most of the other kids were able to give shots to themselves. She got physically sick every night, and cried a great deal of the time, wanting to go home. Eventually the camp called her parents, and they took her home early.

While Jane continued to attend church and participate in the youth group, she didn't invest herself in the group activities, and reports feeling ugly and inadequate during this period. She did very well in grammer school, but continued to be withdrawn. She read a great deal, but used books in a manner similar to watching T.V.--for purposes of escape.

Her diabetes continued to be a major source of conflict in her relationship with her stepmother. Her stepmother did not keep as close a watch on her as her mother had, but Jane continued to rebel against the limits imposed by her diabetic condition. She would eat candy or go barefoot, knowing that this might lead to physical problems. Her stepmother finally taught her to give herself her own insulin shots. She was partially pleased by this, but also took it as an indication that this new parent in her life didn't really want to be bothered by her. Jane felt that her new stepbrother, who was two years younger than she was, got most of the attention, and that whatever she did it wasn't good enough. She would go to her Dad when she was in conflict with her stepmother, and her Dad would often back her up. She sensed a division in the family, with Dad and Jane allied against her stepmother and stepbrother.

Around twelve, she became more aware that her father had a serious problem with alcohol, and felt anxious and afraid about his condition. She would go downstairs at night, find him drinking, and try to get him to stop. When she was fourteen, her father was hospitalized for problems connected with his alcohol abuse. When he came out, he stopped drinking, having been told that if he continued, it would kill him. Jane felt that he was "meaner" now that he wasn't drinking, always in a bad mood, and would not respond to her in the way he had before; it was crucial to her that he not drink, and she did everything she could to see that this didn't happen. Yet she could not do enough, and remembers "giving up" one day when he went to the refrigerator to get a beer, and she "knew" that once he picked it up, he was dead.

Jane entered high-school and again was coming out of herself, gaining more confidence. In the summer of her freshman year, she made a conscious decision to look nicer, take more time for herself, talk to people, be more outgoing, and exercise. She was able to implement these decisions, and people responded; she dated, was popular, and started feeling better about herself.

When she was sixteen, her father went into a coma, was hospitalized, and died three days after Christmas. As on the day her mother died, Jane remembers feeling terribly alone, but also believes that she had "divorced" herself emotionally from her father before he died. In the aftermath of her father's death, she had an overwhelming feeling that what she did didn't matter anymore. Apparently, she associated "taking care of myself and being good to myself" with her father's death, and reacted by "giving up" the gains she was making just before the event occurred.

Jane's father had left all his money in trust to her, and none to his wife. Her older sister suggested that she give half of the money to her stepmother, which Jane agreed to do. She felt that she didn't deserve to get the money, and hoped this might be a way of winning her stepmother's love.

At this point in her life, God is no longer experienced as a meaningful part of either her inner or outer worlds, and does not consciously enter into her attempts to deal with her dilemma.

Aware of feeling sad and lonely, Jane got involved with "bad" kids, becoming sexually active and drinking, smoking, and using drugs. During her Senior year, her stepmother told her that if she wouldn't live by her rules, she could no longer stay at home.

Arrangements were made for her to move in with an uncle and aunt until she finished high school. Jane felt "like an orphan" during this period of time, and continued drinking to get relief from her pain.

After graduation from high school, she was sent to live with her older sister until she started college in the fall. After beginning college she felt "depressed, lonely, and in pain," had no energy to go to classes,and spent much of her time sleeping. Around Christmas, her depression intensified: she was crying all the time, couldn't get dressed, felt like she was "losing it," but also felt it was not an option to reach out for help. There seemed to be no "open doors."

She dropped out of school and acquired the money remaining in her trust fund. She rented an apartment, and moved in with a man she was involved with. She got jobs for brief periods of time, then left them when she got bored. She needed the constant attention of the man she was living with. She continued to drink and use drugs, and began having sexual relationships with other men. She felt that she had to have these encounters, but didn't know why. When her boyfriend found out she had slept with someone else, he kicked her out of her own apartment. She left, moved to another city, but kept going back and involving herself with this man. Finally, after a horrendous fight, he threw her down some stairs, calling her "slut" and "whore." She never went back again, and believes this was because she finally got the punishment she felt she deserved.

She immediately developed a relationship with another man, who moved in with her, and got her to sign her lease over to him, while she continued to pay for the apartment. He then moved his former girlfriend in, and told Jane she would have to leave. She moved out;

shortly after this, Jane superficially cut her wrists, then called the man she had been living with and told him. She saw this as an attempt to get his attention, rather than a serious suicide attempt.

At this time, she received a letter from her sister in another city, inviting her to come and live with her. In reporting this event a number of years later, Jane spontaneously says:

"I thought it was a gift from God. (pause, laughs) I'm being facetious, God wasn't in the picture at that time. I felt I had a place to go, finally."

She moved in with her sister, hoping to get a fresh start. She got a job, but by this point was heavily dependent on alcohol to manage her feelings. The dependency on drugs, alcohol, and abusive sexual relationships continued to interfere with her best attempts to change things. At the urging of her sister, Jane agreed to see a pastoral counselor.

Jane would later look back on the experience of her counseling and describe it to her therapist in the following words:

"One of the most important things the therapy has done for me, over a period of years, was to provide a level of acceptance. Because of my history it took me a long time to feel that I wasn't going to be abandoned no matter what. Because of that level of security, I think it allowed me to eventually find ways to start to go out on my own. For quite a few years, before I got sober, I came here unconsciously trying to get you to abandon me. That didn't happen--then the trust level built. Because it didn't happen with you, I didn't have to abandon myself anymore. I felt supported and encouraged by you to search myself--whatever I came up with was OK."

As Jane indicates, during the initial period of her counseling, her life continued to be chaotic. She continued, and intensified, her self-destructive, addictive behavior, and attempted to act in such a manner that the counselor would "give up on her." At the same time, she refused to follow many of the rules set down by her sister, and seemed to be trying to get her sister to reject her as well. She developed another relationship with an abusive man, and her drinking increased. She was arrested several times for drunken driving. After two years of counseling, with her physical, emotional, and interpersonal life deteriorating, she acknowledged she had a serious drinking problem and entered an inpatient alcohol treatment program.

Jane was able to benefit greatly from her experience in this program. She stopped drinking and has remained sober for the past six years. She became involved in the total A.A. program, and has continued this involvement regularly since leaving the hospital.

Her pastoral counselor maintained contact with her while she was in the treatment program, and when she was released, counseling resumed on a regular basis. A solid therapeutic alliance had formed, and her attempts to be rejected ceased. On that basis, therapeutic work could take place through gaining increased understanding of her own dynamics and by using the counselor as an object appropriate to her growth needs. Much work was done around the meaning of the diabetes, the significance of early losses, low self-esteem, guilt and shame. With the drinking under control, she was able to continue to make significant developmental strides in her counseling in all these areas.

One of the most meaningful aspects of Jane's experience in A.A.

was the development of a relationship with her "Higher Power." She says:

"When I got to A.A., and at the end of meetings they did the Lord's prayer, that brought a lot of positive feelings up for me and changed what I was willing to do."

Her willingness to sublimate her "will" to that of her Higher Power was, in her eyes, a crucial aspect of her recovery. This relationship was experienced by her as central to her recovery and to her continuing sobriety. She sensed that in this relationship, she surrendered her will to her Higher Power; in return, she could trust that Power to take care of her and keep her from drinking, something she could not do on her own. This sense of the relationship was felt most strongly in her prayer life, and, in prayer, Jane felt a comforting and reassuring connection with the God imaged in these terms.

As indicated above, after Jane left the alcohol treatment program, she continued on in her pastoral counseling and in her close involvement with A.A. Her life significantly improved, and became more managable. She took control of her diabetes; she had successful work experiences; she developed a relationship with a more healthy man, and eventually got married. A year after they were married, she decided she wanted to have a child, went through a special clinic for diabetics, and successfully delivered the child.

As Jane developed more competence for managing her life, and as this was affirmed in her counseling, she began to feel more distant from God. This bothered her. Further, she felt some discomfort when her growing ability was affirmed by her counselor, experiencing such

affirmation as in conflict with her A.A. program. She believed such self-affirmation, if it came from her, would be equated with pride or self-will.

When this issue was discussed in counseling, she indicated with much feeling that she was missing the sense of closeness with God that had been there when she had first stopped drinking; that she was afraid of what would happen to her if she got too self-reliant, that she felt guilty and responsible for the disruption of the close, dependent relationship with God, and imaged God as angry with her. Later, she would describe what was happening in the following words:

"When I was first sober, my faith was more childish--I was completely dependent on God to work everything out for me. Then, over the years, I was willing to play with this. What would happen if I don't pray this week? Will I stay sober? Part of me was afraid, part of me wanted to try it. It was like living dangerously . . . In my growth process I've gotten to a point where that urge to grow has been allowed to come out; I've been less afraid of letting that out, which has kind of wrecked havoc with my spirituality because it's brought up a lot of questions for me. Is it O.K. to be your own person, to think for yourself, to not surrender completely?"

Her counselor continued to support her growth, while empathizing with her ambivalence and confusion. The "sense" of her relationship with God and the image of God and self that informed that relationship were made explicit, interpreted, explored, and discussed, in the hope of both understanding where it came from and opening up new options for belief. As Jane hung in and wrestled with what she was feeling without regressing to an earlier, more comfortable position, she

discovered that her worst fears were not realized and she began to move to a slightly different understanding of her relationship with her Higher Power.

The work with Jane continues; her growth, both psychological and spiritual, continues. This case study is best concluded in her own words: "I have a deeper belief now than I had before that it's going to work out--more of a vague feeling of being safe, than like I've prayed for days about it or I've been good, so it's gonna work out. It's not so dependent on what I do. It's kinda like I'm in a void now, because I don't know how to do it this way, I don't know how it works. When I pray it feels uncomfortable. It's like I have this feeling of faith but it's not in my prayer life yet."

"I have a conflict with words like thy will be done, not mine. In the sense that I'm thinking of it like my will is bad and evil--I feel like my will is my own needs, going after things I would like to do. Like that's hurtful. There's this part of me that thinks that what I'm doing now is God's will for me because it makes me whole, and I have a real belief that God wants me to be whole."

C. The Question

As indicated earlier, this case study material will be used to illustrate how the theoretical concepts presented in previous chapters provide a pastoral care giver who is not necessarily acquainted with psychoanalytic theory, the kind of in-depth, dynamic understanding of personal material that can facilitate pastoral work. A primary focus in such work is on the underlying image of God that the parishoner brings to the pastor. In these case studies, the reader has the

opportunity to see the God image as it lies embedded within the total developmental history. A central point of the position developed in the previous four chapters is that that image cannot be fully understood apart from that history.

The pastoral care giver cannot be expected to approach this history seeking to do the kind of intricate and detailed analytic analysis that Rizzuto does in her case studies.[3] Rather, the pastor needs a way of examining this material in light of distinctive pastoral concerns. To develop this "way," I want to return to Mahler's conceptualization of the self-in-development through a process of separation-individuation, as explained in detail in Chapter 1.

While pastors may not be familiar with the analytic terms and concepts Mahler uses in her definitions of each stage in this process, they may grasp more easily what is at stake if each stage can be reformulated as a "question" arising at a certain point in the life of the developing self, a point where new existential possibilities can be discovered. These are questions that only emerge, and can only be "asked" and "answered," in the context of a relationship; the answers that emerge have immense significance for the ongoing growth and development of the self. As indicated in the previous chapter, neither the question asked, nor the answer given, are primarily cognitive in nature, and have more to do with the full realm of organizing and experiencing in the midst of relationship. The "question" is not to be taken literally as a cognitive or essentially verbal one, emerging out of a process of rational thought; rather it

emerges out of the self's need to find out what is possible between self and other.

When the relationship being examined is the relationship with that which concerns us ultimately--i.e., God--and the question focuses on the intentionality of God towards the self, then the question is a theological one. McDargh is again helpful here in his description of the movement from relationship with others to relationship with Other. He writes:

> Something in our fundamental nature, something in our heart, compels us to face the faceless universe. I intend 'face' in both its senses. We come upon ourselves both drawn and driven to face outwards to the limits of our lives and ask the questions of ultimacy. But, further, the intent behind those questions is to find the face of that ultimate reality, to discern its intention towards us and our place before it.[4]

Mahler's stages help us shape the kinds of questions raised by the self when addressing ultimate reality in terms of a personal Thou. A way of reformulating such questions in theological terms might be as follows:

1. Stage of Symbiosis

   Can I, in my relationship with God, be a part of that which is good?

2. Stage of Hatching

   Can I, in my relationship with God, begin to separate and distinguish myself from what I have been a part of, without undue anxiety and lack of support?

3. Stage of Practicing

Can I, in my relationship with God, comfortably express and celebrate my own power and ability?

4. Stage of Rapprochement

Can I, in my relationship with God, acknowledge my need, while at the same time acknowledging my lack of control over that which I need?

5. Stage of Object Constancy

Can I, in my relationship with God, acknowledge both my strengths and my limitations (be myself), and continue to remain committed to that relationship in trust, even in the face of disappointment?

McDargh sums up the crucial question that each one of these sub-questions relates to:

> The problem of self-becoming may be seen as the problem of how to simultaneously 'hold on' and 'let go', how to experience oneself as separate and independent while maintaining the sense of inner sustainment and connecteness which assures one of meaning and enduring place.[5]

Mahler's research in particular, and object relations theory in general, has demonstrated that these "questions" and the "answers" given to them, are vital to the growth and development of the self. These questions only emerge in the context of personal relationship to an "other." When the other in question is "Thou"--ultimate reality related to in terms of personal relationship--then these questions become theological ones. The possibilities for answering such questions lie in the ways that God can be imaged, and the ways that

God can be imaged is significantly impacted by the object-representation of God, as defined in chapter 3.

With this as a working framework, the pastoral care giver can now approach case material with the following three questions in mind:

1. What developmental/theological question is this person raising in the context of their unique history? While at one point or another, each of the five questions has importance to the developing self, one of these questions (representative of one of these stages) can be identified within the history as primary for this person, the question that for this particular person needs to be answered in some new way in order for growth to take place. Analyzing the case material means identifying that question.

2. What is the image of God in relationship to self that is present within the question? As indicated earlier, the question only occurs within relationship to an other; therefore, this core question, once identified, can be examined to uncover both the image of God and of self, that is contained within it.

3. What significant events and relationships in this person's life have contributed to the formulation of this question, and the representations of self and other that are connected to it? Answers to the prior two questions must not be abstract, but must emerge from the specifics of personal history. The connection between these answers and the concrete events and experiences within that history must be demonstrated.

With these three questions in mind, we now return to the case material.

D) Analysis: Jane

The question at the center of Jane's struggle comes from the hatching and practicing periods: is it possible to separate from that which I have been a part of and depended on without being abandoned (autonomy); and, can I experience myself as supported and encouraged in my attempts to celebrate my own power and ability (healthy narcissism)? Her "answer" to these questions is "no," which leaves her in a dilemma since her ongoing growth and development hinge on these opening up as genuine possibilities.

Jane appears to have had a satisfactory symbiotic experience with her mother--she has bonded. She has fond memories of this connection; clearly, her mother "took care of her," and these experiences of having someone there she could depend on to love and care for her are available for the building up of positive self- and object-representations, including the God representation. However, in light of her mother's need for control, a question can be raised about her capacity to support Jane's genuine self as Jane became more developmentally able, and attempted to express these capacities. In any case, this rather comfortable "fit" between mother and daughter was severely disrupted by the diagnosis of diabetes. Her mother reacted to this discovery with a kind of guilty and anxious over-concern, and implemented a program of close supervision of her care. She assumed the total burden of care for Jane's condition, and failed to turn over some of that care when Jane might have been able to do more herself. The early diagnosis of diabetes, and the way it was responded to within the bonded mother-daughter relationship, would

have generated several problems, looked at from an object relations perspective: first, the object (mother) communicated a sense to Jane that she was perceived as having a defect ; something was "wrong" with her, something that she (Jane) obviously had no control over. This occurs simultaneously with Jane experiencing "internal" physical and emotional symptoms related to the diabetes which she was struggling to incorporate into her developing self-concept. Secondly, Jane's mother was anxious and overcontrolling of Jane's behavior, feeling a need to stay in control (rather than gradually handing over control as Jane became more able) in order to make sure nothing bad happened.

In the midst of all this, Jane is both having experiences of "self" and experiences of "other" (object) relating to that self. Just as we bring our experience of our physical selves to a mirror, and look in that mirror to discover who we are, the child uses the parent for this same mirroring function.[6] What emerges within this process for Jane are components of a self-other relationship imaged as a weak and defective self related and bonded to a powerful, controlling, and caretaking other. These components are integrated and perserved, along with components of the more positive and less conflicted symbiotic stage, within the developing self- and object-representations. These "configurations of affect, imagery, and memory"[7] will ultimately be used by Jane in the construction of her image of God.

The sudden death of Jane's mother is traumatic at several different levels. However, to understand its full impact, we need to note that this overwhelming experience of abandonment occurs at a point in Jane's life when she has begun to use her own power and

ability to reach out into her environment to meet needs, and to form relationships apart from those with her mother; not only is she successfully experimenting with more autonomous behavior, but she is proving herself to be especially adept at getting attention (she is chosen as the mascot for a team made up of older girls), and must have been experiencing the pleasurable feelings that were a part of such success. Hence, at some level, keeping in mind that there may have been prior experiences that would have lent themselves to such an interpretation, she would have felt that the loss of her mother was somehow tied to her success in being self-assertive and experiencing the pleasure that came from such behavior.

In the aftermath of her mother's death, Jane looks to her God for help and support. God functions here very much in the terms of the transitional object, as defined in Chapter 2. To restate Horton's definition of transitional relatedness:

> Transitional relatedness is defined as the person's unique experience of an object, whether animate or inanimate, tangible or intangible, in a reliably soothing manner based on the object's associative or symbolic connection with an abiding, mainly maternal primary process presence. Characteristically . . . this relationship facilitates engagement with novel, conflictual, even frightening circumstances . . .[8]

Transitional object formation occurs on the basis of the child's need, creativity, and experiences with reality (others) that provide the material out of which the child will create transitional objects. For Jane, the image of God that is appealed to is closely connected with positive experiences of her mother's care and concern. Not only is her mother the primary significant other in Jane's earliest

experience, but it is mother who consciously and intentionally offers Jane a God concept--the God who is caring, powerful, and present in people's lives, but also very "influenced" by how people behave. Clearly, Jane draws upon these experiences in the midst of her need for comfort and soothing following her mother's death.

Yet the image of God, both "created" and "found" by her at this time, is experienced, like the other side of her relationship with her mother, as frustrating. What she appeals to God for is not felt to be forthcoming. When she experiences herself abandoned by God as she had been abandoned by her mother, she responds in kind by abandoning God. As she withdraws from other people, she also withdraws from God. She finds no one available to help her rework that relationship.

In the period after her mother's death, issues around control, attention, and self-esteem continue to predominate, as indicated in her experience at the camp for diabetics. Low self-esteem is obviously coupled with a sense of incompetence; yet to be competent is to risk loss. Her interpretation of her stepmother's attempts to teach her to give herself her shots are significant here--the pressure to gain more control over her own life, to increase her autonomy, are seen as rejecting rather than as supportive.

The emerging struggle with her father's drinking intensifies her conflict. Again, she is preoccupied with the question of her own power to affect the person she is attached to; again, in a manner that seems strikingly similar to what happened with her mother, she is powerless to stop him from drinking (and dying) yet feels that there is some connection between the power of her self-assertive wishes and her personal success in acting on them, and his loss. He dies just

after she had finally made some decisions to take charge of her life, and to worry less about taking care of him (to give up control of what she couldn't control, and to gain control over that which it was possible to change).

Her relationship with God is "reawakened" following the development of a relationship with her pastoral counselor and her inpatient A.A. treatment. This is the kind of experience that Rizzuto points to in her description of the object representation of God when she writes:

> . . . as is true of all other objects, God cannot be fully repressed. As a transitional object representation, he [God] is always potentially available for further acceptance or further rejection.[9]

Both her counseling relationship and her involvement in A.A. reconnect her with self- and object-images that emerged out of the earliest experiences of being nurtured and having someone available she could depend on. The image of God that emerges with such positive feeling is the God who can be depended upon to nurture, protect, and care for her. Jane points to her sense of this God when she is asked to identify her favorite Bible story and writes:

"The story of children coming to Jesus and his being open and receptive to them. Because it said that he loved children, felt they were basically good, and would protect them."

Yet there is another side to this image of God that is formed out of her interpretation of her experiences with significant others in her life and it is this "other side" that accounts for her growing sense of distance from God as her personal compentency develops. For

this God is a jealous God. The God that will love and support her will do so provided she remains in a dependent position relative to that God. As the ongoing counseling continues to support and encourage the growth and development of the self, the shadow side of the God representation emerges, as does the implications of this relationship for the ongoing growth of the self. The core question for Jane's growth emerges clearly in relationship with her God. The question addressed to God becomes:

Can You support my separateness and autonomy, my growing awareness of my own potencies, and be comfortable with the good and pleasurable feelings that I experience in exercising them? Or are such capacities, the exercise of them, and the feelings derived from their use, somehow "bad"; do they take something from You, and will Your response be to abandon me even though I continue to need You?

This extended question is at the center of Jane's psychological and spiritual struggle, and the pastor looking back over her history with the help of an object relations perspective, can begin to understand in greater depth the form and content of this struggle: how Jane's self-concept has developed out of her sense of significant other's in relationship to her; how one of those significant relationships is her relationship with God, imaged in a particular way; how that image has been shaped by her relationships with other people and events at crucial moments in her life; and how the resolution of a key developmental issue, and hence her ongoing movement towards a fullness of life, will be retarded or supported by how she images this Ultimate Other in relationship to her.

E. Jim

Jim is a fifty year old man who I began seeing for pastoral psychotherapy when he was 45. As the tenth child in a family of sixteen, it is not surprising that Jim's primary sense of his mother in his earliest years is of someone whom he wasn't supposed to bother. His mother was the person who ran things at home. Jim describes his father as distant, involved in his work outside the home, and "just not a part of my life." His father was closer to the older children in the family than he was to Jim.

Jim was expected to obey parental demands without question, and, above all, not to make trouble. "Making trouble" consisted of any kind of behavior that was disturbing to his parents. They responded in a manner that was often arbitrary, uncontrolled, and, on occasion, abusive. Around the age of 4, Jim was knocked unconscious by his mother for "talking back" to her.

When Jim was six, his family was evicted from the home they were living in because there were "too many kids in the family." His older sister was removed from the home at this time, probably because she had been sexually abused by Jim's father. For a period of time, they lived in a garage, using blankets to divide one room from another. There were no bathrooms and no running water. Jim's father went to work in another city and visited on the weekends. His mother put most of her energy into keeping the family together.

Jim began attending church at his mother's insistence. The whole family, with the exception of Jim's father, would attend church on Sundays. In looking back, Jim says that "it became clear that it was forbidden to talk about religion with Dad; he associated it with

something bad happening." Jim remembers that when his sister wrenched her knee at a church picnic, his father saw this as an example of bad things happening to people who associate with a church.

Jim recalls an incident early in his life, probably around the age of five or six, when he was sitting in church, trying to figure out how to read a hymnal, and a man in the pew told him how to follow the phrases. Jim describes it being "as if a secret had been opened up to me, so I learned to enjoy the hymns. I had something special." He also recalls an occasion when he was six or seven, hitchiking alone at night, becoming frightened and "praying that God would send a car to give me a ride home."

When Jim was seven, the family moved from the garage to a small house. The message from his mother was "Don't be a bother" and "If we're all good enough and things work out well, and God's great, then we'll all be back together." Despite the chaos within the family, it felt terribly important to Jim to have his family together, and hence he put all his energy into trying to determine what being good consisted of, and doing it.

Several events took place when Jim was around seven, that were profoundly traumatic for him. Since his father was rarely home, Jim looked forward to spending time with him. He felt that he needed something from his father that he could get from their being together. Sometimes he would take Jim hiking with him. On one of these occasions, Jim was sexually abused by his father. The memory of this event was repressed by Jim for many years, and only returned to him later as an adult. At the time it happened, he simply blocked it out and went to bed for several days. He has a clear recollection of

his mother saying to him: "It's time to get going; you've been in bed long enough," and his feeling that he didn't want to get up and get going. A year after this event, Jim's infant sister died from injuries received when she fell from a high-chair while Jim and several other people were in the room, an event that devastated his mother, and that he felt personal guilt about. Probably as a symptom of repressing these traumatic events, Jim began to suffer from debilitating headaches.

Involvement in the life of the church became more significant to Jim in this period of time. There was a shift from attending for his mother's sake to going because he wanted to. He had the feeling that going to church was connected with being good, and that if he was good, the family would all be together again. Part of being good enough, as Jim put it, was "listening to what the preacher said and doing it." Praying became very important. Feeling a need for "cleansing in the deepest part of my being," he would fervently pray, on his knees, for forgiveness and healing.

At the same time, he felt that people in the congregation looked down on him. He has a vivid memory of being slapped by a Sunday school teacher, for cutting up in class. Years later, he expressed his feeling in the following words:

"I was so hurt because I felt I was being so good."

Jim had a strong sense by this point that there were family secrets, that had to remain secret at all cost. He was repeatedly told that what happened in the family was not to be discussed outside, that things would be O.K. if only he kept quiet, kept it all inside. This message was communicated particularly by his father.

The family was evicted again and there was no place for them to move to. The parents went to live with some of the older children who had homes of their own, and Jim and some of his siblings were placed in a children's home. Several months later, the parents managed to secure a small, two room house, and the family got back together again. There was very little privacy, and the house was divided up using boards and blankets.

In this period, Jim continued to focus his attention on "getting right with God"; this meant figuring out what he needed to do to please God, a feeling that he wanted to have but which eluded him no matter how many times he went to the alter. At the same time, he saw God as someone who would protect him, and Jesus as one who was "with me when no one else would understand." He felt that as long as he prayed to God, and did what God wanted, God would protect him.

During his high-school years, he became increasingly independent, and got some distance from his parents. As he later put it, "I began to have an adult life as a kid." His parents showed no particular interest in what he did or didn't do outside the home, as if they were simply waiting for him to leave. Jim was extensively involved in church and in the Boy Scouts. He also met and began dating the woman he would eventually marry.

In tenth grade, Jim was elected president of his church youth group, after he had given a presentation on prayer, in which he talked about prayer as a "direct pipeline to God." To his surprise, the pastor was "awed" by what he said, and other adults were very impressed. Following this presentation, the youth counselors for the

first time offered him a ride home. It was at this point Jim began to consider the possibility of entering the ministry.

Looking back, Jim believes that he had developed a "bifarcated" image of God, where one God was experienced as caring and compassionate, the other as a God who would send him to Hell if he didn't measure up. His task, as he understood it, was to "stay so pure and morally correct that I would not lose my chance to be at home with God." The Biblical text, "In my Father's house there are many mansions" became especially meaningful because that was where he wanted to be heading.

Jim began to feel that the church he was a part of was too cold, distant, and formal, and started attending a different church that both demanded greater accountability and seemed to offer a greater degree of intimacy. He felt that this church was made up of working class people who "couldn't make it without God in their life," and he identified with them. When he was seventeen, he went to a revival, and felt that his call to the ministry was validated.

As soon as he turned eighteen, Jim left home and traveled for a period of time doing odd jobs. When his girlfriend moved to another city to go to college, Jim followed her there, and got a job in a department store. He worked hard, and advanced quickly. When he turned twenty, he married this woman that he had dated since high-school. Still interested in the ministry, he got an appointment as supply pastor to a small church. While externally things seemed to be going well for Jim, internally things were getting worse. As he put it later:

"Outside I had all the appearance of being clean; inside, I was a mess."

Getting married had not cleared up what was troubling Jim, and he "became more intentional, more focused on what God wanted me to do; then God would give me peace and release me from my fear."

In pastoring the church, Jim felt great pressure to meet the needs of his congregation. He defined his task as "figuring out what these people wanted, and then doing that." His success in accomplishing this earned him a great deal of positive attention. He believed that God expected him to "feed My sheep," and if he failed to do that, he would be rejected, not only by his people, but by his God.

Over the next six years, despite intense inner conflict and turmoil, Jim completed both college and seminary. After seminary, he was ordained. Two weeks after his ordination, his mother died. Jim felt that she had held out for this event, and that his ordination was a fulfillment of her hopes and dreams.

Jim became the pastor of a church. His father, who had developed emphasyma, and a drinking problem, came to live with him. Jim had intensely ambivalent feelings about this, but hoped to use this time to "discover who my father is." As it turned out, Jim devoted a great deal of energy to taking care of his father; he reports that "I had to be father to him; he was never father to me." Yet, he was unable to be fully in touch with the anger he felt about this. After three years, his father died.

In the period after his father's death, Jim became increasingly depressed. Although he was doing an excellent job of pastoring his church, he felt overwhelmed by what he took to be the demands of his

parishoners. After much work on his part, the church voted to build a new building. Instead of feeling joyful, he experienced a kind of "terror" that he couldn't understand. He felt that he had lost all his creativity, that he had no energy or motivation any more, and he would simply sit in his chair for hours at a time. He became increasingly concerned that his people would discover that he was not the "responsible, intelligent, creative, productive, successful pastor that I was expected to be and that I wanted to be." He asked for, and was given, a move to another congregation. The parishoners at the church he was leaving were disappointed and upset, and very much wanted him to stay, feeling that he was doing an excellent job.

Jim's sense of himself, however, was that he must not be doing something right, because if he was, he wouldn't feel the way he did, and things would get better for him if he could just figure out what God wanted him to do and do it. When he left the parish, there was a great outpouring of love from the people Jim had ministered to, but he was unable to receive it, as it was so discrepant with what he felt inside.

In his new parish, Jim felt better; however, these feelings proved to be only temporary. As Lent came on, Jim again felt overwhelmed by his responsibilities. One day, when he was sitting in his office, a woman came in and began complaining to him about his not changing a light bulb in the hallway that had burned out. She indicated that if she fell and injured herself, she would hold him accountable.

Jim felt an overpowering impulse to leave all his responsibilities and disappear. His inner response was "How can I

take on one more responsibility, how can I get one more thing done?" He went home, went to bed, and was unable to get up. Finally, he was persuaded to check himself into the hospital.

While he was in the hospital Jim first began to remember some of the incidents of abuse that he had experienced as a child. Getting in touch with these memories was extremely painful and frightening for him, but he felt that it was "God's intention that I deal with this, and God would sustain me." After a period of dealing with these memories, Jim returned to the parish. While the parish was very supportive, he felt isolated and ashamed with this new awareness of his history.

He believed that "if these people found out what I have done, what has gone on in my life, I'll be put out on my ear." He began to feel depressed again, and at this point entered into an extended period of pastoral psychotherapy.

Jim's therapeutic experience consisted of developing a therapeutic relationship which he experienced as supportive, valuing, and dependable, becoming aware of his history at both the cognitive and the affective level, and then working within that relationship on key developmental conflicts and traumatic events. Along with other issues that were dealt with, the opportunity for Jim to rework the God imagery that had been a significant part of his experience throughout most of his life was a significant part of his counseling process. This work went on through a number of stages, parallelling other aspects of the therapy.

Jim's life is different today than it was when he began counseling. He is not as driven as he was, and is able to set more

limits on the demands he places on himself and others. He is able to affirm and utilize more comfortably his own unique gifts and abilities, and give more expression to those things which genuinely and spontaneously come from him, as opposed to always needing to please others. He continues to wrestle with his God, and the diverse images of God that have emerged from his experiences. Currently, his struggle is to sort out the wheat from the chaff, to discover what remains solid and real for him now that so much has changed.

Jim's ongoing journey is best summarized in his own words:

> All my life I've been in touch with that dimension [the spiritual] and been informed by that. It's been a very private kind of thing that has rarely been shared with other people. Another way of talking about it is the God who is that authority outside of myself who made demands on me as over against God as that which is authentic self, God at the core of my being. A piece of the shift that I experience spiritually, psychologically, and emotionally is the sense that that which I can trust is imaged as that which is at the center of my being so that the authority is no longer outside. It's a centering so that when I experience that which I knew intuitively which gets expressed in prayer or a sense of inner guidance it is at once experienced as Self with a capital "S" and as Christ in me; so that the call is at this point to trust that authority that is within me not just without. I perceive that I am being faithful not in fulfilling a lot of obligations that are imposed on me. Faithfulness has to do with trusting the God within. I am wanting to be careful not to describe God as simple self-fulfillment but rather as God.

F. Analysis: Jim

When Jim is asked to identify his favorite Bible verse, he chooses John 16: 33:

"In the world you will have trouble; but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world."

In light of Jim's history, the logic of this choice is obvious. Much of his experience of "this world" seems to be frustrating and without hope. Hope, is found only in relationship to "something" which is greater than, and can overcome, the "trouble" of this world. That "something," from a very early age, is what Jim called God.

Yet Jim's history also illustrates the impossibility of imaging God in a manner which fully transcends personal history and experience. The God that emerges in Jim's life, while a significant resource that preserves and protects the integrity of his developing self at critical points when personal relationships fail him, ultimately becomes what he calls a "bifarcated" God, which not only allows him to transcend and manage some of the trauma he experiences, but also replicates those experiences. The history of Jim's wrestling with his God (his favorite Bible story is Gen. 32--Jacob wrestling with the angel) bears witness to the significance of Rizzuto's summation of how God develops as transitional object:

> . . . throughout life God remains a transitional object at the service of gaining leverage with oneself, with others, and with life itself. This is so not because God is God, but because, like the teddy bear, he has obtained a good half of his stuffing from the primary objects the child has 'found' in his life. The other half of God's stuffing comes from the child's capacity to 'create' God according to his needs.[10]

The analysis that follows will clarify what this "stuffing" consisted of in Jim's case.

Using Mahler's "questions" to help us explore Jim's history, we see him asking that earliest of relational questions: "Can I be a part of something that is good?" Throughout this history, we observe

his struggle to find a home -- a home which he could value, and which, by welcoming and supporting him, could bestow value on him. Given the size of Jim's family, and the apparent instability of both mother and father, it is unlikely that Jim had a satisfactory bonding experience with a significant other during his earliest years. His mother had the capacity to provide for his basic physical needs, but minimal capacity to attend to the emotional needs of his developing self. Yet both his considerable capacity for high levels of effective functioning in his life, and the supportive qualities of his representation of God, suggest some positive experiences of early bonding. Jim seems to have a sense of what it might mean to feel more connected, more bonded, more a "part of," but it is a sense that leaves him feeling hungry rather than full; something is offered that can easily be lost, easily withdrawn depending on how he behaves within the relationship.

Basic trust in either self, or other, is not fully established experientially. Jim has a good deal of innate ability, particularly at the cognitive level, and nature seems to have worked for him even when nurture didn't in allowing him to partially compensate and cope with parental failures. But difficulty at the earliest stage--the unanswered question--is carried forward into later stages, and, from Jim's side, impacts the nature of the interpersonal experiences he has there. As he asks the "questions" in these later stages, the capacity of his parents to provide appropriate interpersonal answers to them continues to be limited by their own problems, so that later stage questions remain conflicted and unanswered.

As Jim gives expression to his nascent self in a spontaneous and genuine fashion--what Winnicott defined as gestures expressive of the "True Self"--he encounters two kinds of parental response. His mother responds negatively as if such expressions are a bother, a disruptive distraction, which threatens stability in the family. If he wants her to be there for him, his task, as he interprets it, is to please her by not being a bother, which means not expressing his genuine and spontaneous self. Hence, we see experiences where this true self is felt to be bad, and has to be suppressed in favor of a false self (compliant) organization. This false self is the related self; the true self is experienced as disconnected.

The wish to be a part of something is further complicated for Jim by his experience of his father. In Jim's history, Dad is experienced as having something special to offer him (perhaps because he was not around much and could more easily be idealized), and Jim holds out the hope of eliciting his father's attention. The problem here is that his father is unable or unwilling to avoid exploiting his children--including Jim--in the interest of satisfying his own needs. Wishes for closeness or intimacy with his Dad, if acted on, lead to exploitation and abuse; and therefore such wishes are assigned to the bad self-representation--they seem to Jim to generate both the loss of the good sense of the self and the sense of the good other. As with his mother, here, too, an expression of genuine self--the wish for closeness--gets associated with what brings about abuse--what changes good Dad to bad Dad--and hence is assigned to the "bad" self-representation.

What Jim's mother and father seem to have had in common, but to different degrees, was a set of dynamics that indicate narcissistic panthology--they could not sufficiently manage their own internal needs for gratification in the relationship with Jim, and support the process of his genuine "self-in-development." The sense of "acceptable self" that develops in Jim is the self that allows a connection with these needed and valued "others" to be maintained.

Psychologically speaking, the need to be connected is crucial to the survival of the infant. Therefore, perserving connection with an "other" will take precedence over genuine and spontaneous self-expression. If the cost of maintaining the connection is the suppression of the true self and development of the false self, then that cost will be paid. This is central to Jim's experience. In simplified form, being "good"--and hence the possibility of being connected to something "good"--consists of meeting the needs of others; being "bad"--and experiencing himself as having parents who respond to such "badness" by being "bad" themselves (i.e., abandoning an abusing him)--consists of expressing his own needs. A middle ground, with room for his needs and the needs of others, does not emerge as an experiential possibility.

In the terms of self- and object-representation, Jim's genuine self is expenced as a "bad" self, which gets "good" self in trouble; the "good" self is the compliant self that meets the needs of others, and in so doing, becomes valuable to them, earns their interest and attention, and remains connected. Value is not conferred because of anything intrinsically good about that self, but only so long as the needs of others are met.

Remembering that these early experiences with significant others provides much of the material that becomes available for the imaginative construction of the object-representation of God, and that in later life the response to relational questions is mediated through that object-representation, we now turn to an examination of the shape and function of the God representation in Jim's history.

As was true with Jane, God is associated with mother in the earliest period of Jim's life--it is his mother who affirms the importance of both God and church. However, apart from that similarity, there are important differences between Jane's situation and Jim's. Jim's Dad does not join with his Mom in valuing relationship with God, but opposes it--it is "forbidden to talk about religion with Dad." Secondly, the self- and object-representational material which Jim has to draw upon in his construction of the God representation has emerged out of a far less satisfying symbiotic experience, the experience of yearning to be a part, rather than actually being a part in some on-going, satisfying fashion.

McDargh, however, reminds us that the object-representation of God is not only based on those early experiences with parents, but includes both the "circumstances of religious instruction and the child's first introduction to the notion of God" and "the image of God available in the family and in the religion or popular culture at large."[11] Jim's involvement with the community that makes up the church he attends provides him with some growth promoting experiences which are more satisfying than those at home, and which make their contribution to the object-representation of God that emerges for him. In light of what has been said above about Jim's wish to

experience himself as valued within a close relationship, consider his interaction with the man, in God's house, who took the time to point out to him how to read a hymnal, and the words Jim uses years later to describe his reaction:

"It was a if a secret had been opened up to me, so I learned to enjoy hymns. I had something special."

By the time Jim is seven or eight, God has emerged as a significant other in his life. In this relationship, as in his relationship with the church community, he is able to be a part of something good, and finds value bestowed on him in return. Jim's longing for "goodness" has increased as the traumatic experiences in his own life have intensified his own sense of inner "badness." The image of God he "creates" and "finds" offers him hope in what feels like an otherwise hopeless situation, and provides the kind of "solace" that Horton attributes to the transitional object.

Yet, as pointed out earlier, the image of God Jim relates to is not free from the negative side of his experiences with significant others, and hence genuine solace eludes him. The possibility is always there that rather than those early, painful experiences being transcended and transformed in new relationships, the past will be repeated. This is true of his relationship both with God and church. The Sunday school teacher hits him for being bad when he was "trying so hard to be good." The narcissistic side of Jim's God representation, the side which threatens hurt rather than healing, and raises the possibility of repetition rather than repair, is seen in his preoccupation with "getting right with God," defined by him as figuring out what he needed to do to please God. Only in this way,

will value be conferred on him by that which he values. He fears abandonment, if he fails to figure out what God wants, and to do it.

As he gets older, he has experiences in the church which reinforce this view. Church members are seen as all too willing to affirm him when he is able to do something valuable for them. Rather than Jim feeling valued for who he genuinely is, he interprets such experiences in the light of his belief that he is providing them with what they need, and is valued accordingly. This allows him to feel connected, but at the cost of feeling genuine. Pleasing God becomes more defined in terms of God's need to have him "feed My sheep," and in staying "so pure and morally correct" that he would not lose his chance to be "at home with God."

The image of God as demanding such morally correct behavior from Jim shows the overdetermined quality of the God representation--its capacity to meet different levels of psychological need at the same time. In this case, it represent boths the narcissitic quality of the parents interaction with him, as well as his own need for super-ego support--support in maintaining defenses against unacceptable impulses--in the face of his parents' inability to set appropriate limits at home. Out of this total constellation of interpersonal and intrapsychic factors, the idea of becoming a minister--serving others in the service of God--begins to have appeal to Jim.

Yet Jim discovers that ministry, without further resolution of the self- and object-representations that influence this decision, cannot give him the satisfaction of truly feeling an acceptable part of something that he so longs for. He is never fully secure in his relationship to his congregation, just as he is never fully secure in

his relationship with God; both are experienced as conditional on his being something other than what he feels himself truly to be, and therefore such relationships cannot be relaxed in and enjoyed. Frustration, anger, and a growing ambivalence result, and more and more energy must go into repressing those feelings and impulses that feel so threatening to his connection with significant others. What happens in his relationship with God when he doesn't want to feed the sheep? What happens when he begins to take pleasure in his own success as a minister, rather that in the pleasure that his efforts bring to others? His very success as a minister exacerbates the inner conflict. Resulting feelings, thoughts, and impulses, while being genuine and spontaneous expressions of the true self, have to be repressed by intensifying false self-defenses.

When Jim is finally confronted by the parishoner who claims that by not attending to her needs (changing the light bulb) he will be responsible if something bad happens to her, the conflicts, feelings, and memories become overwhelming. Jim's resources are such that he is able to turn what is initially an experience of breakdown into an experience of breakthrough, and he begins the difficult process that he is still in of reworking the self- and object-representations that have so dominated his inner life.

The degree to which reworking the image of God is a crucial part of this work for Jim is indicated when he says at a point after much of this work has taken place:

"A piece of the shift that I experience spiritually, psychologically, and emotionally is the sense that that which I can trust is imaged as that which is at the center of my being so that

authority is no longer outside. It's a centering so that when I experience that which I know intimately which gets expressed in prayer or a sense of inner guidance, it is at once experienced as Self with a capital "S" and as Christ in me."

There is the suggestion in what he says here that Jim is moving in the direction of being able to affirm experientially that he <u>is</u> a part of something that is good. Through a long and difficult process that has involved much work on Jim's part, he is starting to experience in his relationship with God the healing of self that he has sought for so long.

Footnotes to Chapter 6

1. Charles V. Gerkin, The Living Human Document (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984.)

2. See Edgar Draper, George Meyer, Zane Parzen, and Gene Samuelson, "On the Diagnostic Value of Religious Ideation," Archives of General Psychiatry 13, (Sept. 1965): 202-207.

3. See the case studies in Rizzuto, Part Two.

4. McDargh, XV.

5. McDargh, 225.

6. The concept of "mirroring" is extensively explored in Kohut's writings on narcissism, where he develops the idea of a "mirroring transference." For a good explanation, see Randall, 46-54.

7. McDargh, 124.

8. Horton, 51.

9. Rizzuto, p. 179.

10. Rizzuto, p. 179.

11. McDargh, p. 116.

Chapter 7

IMPLICATIONS FOR PASTORAL PRACTICE

> An engagement in later life with a new set of ideas about God might awaken the possibility of a renewed relationship with one's object representations of God and sponsor a process of reworking those representations so that they are more available for faith . . . But note that we are not here fronting an argument for a process of 'ideas' correcting 'ideas.' Where a later life encounter with a new set of conceptions of God has re-evoked a relationship with the object representation of God in a way potent for faith, two things must have occurred. First, the power of alternative notions of God is found only so far as they do in fact engage the conscious and unconscious object representations of God. Unless that engagement takes place, no amount of argument at the level of intellectual discourse would be sufficient to effect the radical change of heart that might be expressed in a conversion to belief. Second, this . . . transformation of the object representation of God and the relevant self representations only occurs as these new ideas allow for the reorganization of alternative memorialized experiences . . . Another way of saying this is that no amount of talk about God who is in solidarity and compassionate union with creation can make any affective sense at all, least of all the sense that catalyzes psychic reorganization, if the individual hearing that talk has no referents for the experience of being loved in that way. Put more simply still, 'God is love' can make no sense to a human being who has never known what it feels like to be loved, however inadequately.[1]

By now readers have gained some familiarity with object relations theory, seen how that theory can be integrated with a theological perspective, and had an opportunity to use that theory to deepen their understanding of material that might be presented to them as pastoral care providers. Possessing such an understanding is valuable. However, understanding alone is not enough for effective pastoring.

Understanding a situation in a particular way has implications for how one will act within that situation, and must lead to acts of care that grow out of, and are based on, that understanding. Hence, this final chapter explores the implications of the perspective that has been presented for the practice of pastoral care. These "practical" implications will be organized around three pastoral activities: attending, assessing,and intervening.

A. Attending

Object relations theory validates from the side of psychology what Christian theology has affirmed, and what pastoral ministry has tried to actualize: that we find ourselves in and through our relationships with significant others (objects). Pastoral ministry takes as its particular area of concern and expertise the relationship with one particular "object" or "other," which it calls God, and tries to explore in detail the intricacies of that relationship. Scripture and theology, both of which seek to say something about the nature of this Ultimate Other, have historically been used by pastors as they seek to act as guides in exploring the possibilities of this relationship. Acts of pastoral care occur as part of this broad understanding of ministry; if such an understanding cannot be applied to what the pastor is doing, then pastoral care loses its distinctively pastoral identity.

At the center of the perspective that has been developed in this project is the claim that the object-representation of God is central both to our experience (or sense) of God, and to what we feel to be the possibilities for the growth and development of ourselves within

that relationship. Most pastoral activity--preaching, teaching, pastoral care, worship, etc.--have as their underlying purpose the facilitation of this relationship. If this is the case, then it follows that in the attempt to minister, a primary focus of pastoral attention needs to be on attending to the vital image of God (the object-representation) as that reveals itself in a particular person's current life, relationships, history, and interaction with the pastor.

Making the object-representation of God a focus of pastoral attention helps to resolve a conflict that is sometimes encountered at both the theoretical and the practical level in the practice of pastoral care. On the one hand, a pastor with a liberal, humanistic orientation, may feel that if the image of God is focused on in pastoral care, then the person in the here and now of their current relationships may be slighted, or, worse still, lost sight of all together. Focusing on the relationship with God may be seen as colluding with the parishioner in avoiding important issues with significant others. The solution may be to ignore exploration of the relationship with God, and focus exclusively on immediate relationships. On the other hand, a pastor of a more conservative bent may focus on the relationship with God as if it were something entirely removed and separate from the total relational and interpersonal life of the person living within that relationship, as if the parishioner's relationship with God transcended the dynamics of human relationships, and hence those dynamics could go unattended.

When the object-representation of God, understood from the psycho-theological perspective presented above, is taken as the focus of pastoral attention, then this becomes an artificial and unnecessary

distinction. The perspective offered in this paper argues that neither view is adequate to truly engage the person who seeks pastoral care, and makes two things abundantly clear: first, that the image of God is tied in with the growth and development of the self towards a fullness of life. Secondly, that image cannot possibly be attended to without at the same times fully attending to that self, it's history, and its relationship with other people. Hence, this perspective supports a view of pastoral care that is focused on the image of God in a manner that accords full dignity and concern to persons in the immediacy of their here and now relationships.

B. Assessing

If the initial act of pastoral care is attending to the image of God, then the second act is assessing that image. The pastoral care provider focuses attention on the image of God in an attempt to understand the dynamic relationship between God and self. Such an approach to the task of pastoral care is consistent with a historical understanding of what ministry is all about: ministers have traditionally focused on the image of God in the interest of bringing about a relationship with God which could truly facilitate an abundance of life. Again, there is congruence here between the psychological truth of an object relations approach and Christian theology--both affirm that the nature of the object (its characteristics) can facilitate either healing and wholeness or brokenness. As Kaufmann, writing from the theological perspective, puts it:

> . . . the question whether one's feeling of alienation, self-hatred and guilt will separate one from God, or whether the relation to God will prove the basis for dealing creatively with these destructive feelings and attitudes, will depend very much on the conception of God one holds.[2]

Hence, the image of God is attended to by the pastor from a perspective that holds that some images of God are more conductive to healing, wholeness, and growth than others. The pastor approaches the parishioner with an understanding of the Ultimate Other which is informed by the history and traditions of Christian faith. However, object relations theory adds two things to the perspective of Christian theology: an examination of both the needs of the self if it is to grow and develop, and the qualities of the other that facilitates such growth. I have argued above that pastoral care providers must take these insights seriously and allow them to impact the understanding of self and other that are already operative as a result of their study of theology and Scripture. If, as Christians, we affirm that God is love, then object relations theory helps us to understand how love works if we are to be nurtured into a fullness of life. It tells us something about the love that heals, the love that promotes human growth and development.

If this is the case, than the pastoral care provider attends to images of God and self in an attempt to uncover the form and shape of the object-representation of God, and to assess whether that representation is enhancing or limiting the growth of the self. By knowing something about what images enhance personal growth and what images retard it, we are in a better position to ascertain whether the particular image of God held by a particular person has the potential

for liberating and promoting growth. We cannot know this, however, by just knowing the image of God; we also have to know the person who relates to that image, for only by such knowledge can we understand the particular needs this persons may have, and therefore, what dimension of God's love is needed.

Assessment will involve both looking at the object-representation and the self-representation. In the case studies presented earlier, the reader had an opportunity to examine these representations in some detail. In doing so, it becomes obvious that the God who can bring healing and wholeness to Jane will be imaged and experienced differently than the God who can perform a similar function for Jim. An understanding of God as available to both has significant theological implications. While these theological issues cannot be fully explored and addressed within the limits of this project, it can be pointed out that such an understanding of God might help provide a more comprehensive understanding of the classical Christian view of God coming to us in the form we need ("And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us . . ."). Pastors interested in assessing the object of faith will use their understanding of what facilitates the growth of the self-in-relationship, to determine if the God being related to is in fact the God who can bring the hope and healing that Christian faith bears witness to.

C. Intervention

The first two steps outlined above--attending and assessing--lead quite naturally to the third, intervening. On the one hand, pastoral intervention can be undertaken for the purpose of supporting an

already present image of God that is adequate to the task of nurturing and sustaining the growth and development of the self; on the other hand, pastoral intervention can be directed towards changing or transforming an image of God that is inadequate to this task. Action of this latter sort, which is the primary focus in this section, follows from an assessment which leads pastor and parishioner to conclude that the image of God is a false, or idolatrous image:[3] that is, an image of an Ultimate Other in relationship to whom the growth of the self towards an abundance of life is stunted or retarded, as opposed to enhanced. This is the kind of pastoral activity that Merle Jordan describes in Taking on the Gods when he writes:

> Taking on the gods is a significant responsibility of pastoral counseling. Confronting those psychic structures, forces, and images which masquerade as God; bringing love, faith, and hope into the lives of persons; and being an extension ministry of Jesus Christ walking in the hells of human existence are all ways of expressing the true evangelistic purposes of pastoral counseling. The thought of taking on the gods in one's clients and in oneself may seem like arrogance or a humbling and awesome challenge. Nevertheless, taking on the gods is at the heart and soul of pastoral counseling.[4]

While Jordan suggests that "taking on the gods," defines the task of the pastoral counselor, it also informs other pastoral acts such as preaching, and teaching, and might be seen as an underlying focus of pastoral ministry in general. The strategy for pastoral intervention intended to have a transformative impact on the image of God held by a person is dictated by the understanding developed in this paper of that image as a personal object-representation. Knowing what an

object-representation is, how it develops, and what can be done to change it, all inform pastoral activity of this kind.

Pastoral care providers invest themselves in attempting to have a transformative impact on this personal image of God by representing a more adequate image, an image that has the capacity to bring healing and wholeness, to nurture and sustain growth. Jordan equates this with the historic pastoral task of confronting false idols.

> A fundamental task of pastoral counseling is to challenge idolatry: the worship of psychic false gods who usurp God's place at the center of the self and oppressively define people's identities.[5]

This confrontation can take place in two ways: it can be done in a verbal, cognitive manner, in which the pastor speaks <u>about</u> God; and it can be done in an incarnational way, in which the pastor tries to <u>represent</u> something of God's love to the other person in and through the pastoral relationship. The effort to do the latter has received strong support in contemporary pastoral counseling.[6] Howard Clinbell, in the revised edition of his classic work on pastoral care and counseling, places the relationship at the center of pastoral work:

> Caring and counseling can be a way of communicating the gospel by helping them [persons unable to hear the 'good news'] open themselves to a healing relationship. Until they have experienced accepting unearned love in a human relationship, it cannot come alive for them. Until they are grasped by caring acceptance (the always limited human counterpart of God's grace) in a life-to-life encounter, the good news of the Christian message cannot become a liberating experienced reality for them. Helping relationships are places where this limited and fragmentary but transforming incarnation of grace can occur.[7]

Object relations theory contributes to our understanding of pastoral action at this point in two ways. First, it provides solid, psychological support from the human side for the relational perspective: that the image of God, viewed as a personal object-representation, may be changed in and through a particular kind of relationship with a new object (the care giver). To restate again what McDargh says in the quotation with which I began this section:

> . . . no amount of talk about God who is in solidarity and compassionate union with creation can make any affective sense at all, least of all the sense that catalyzes psychic reorganization, if the individual hearing that talk has no referents for the experiences of being loved that way.[8]

Secondly, the object relations perspective provides a great deal of insight into what needs to characterize the activity of the caring person within that relationship if it is to have the potential for image transformation; this includes both "being" and "doing" dimensions of the pastoral presence. Looked at from a theological perspective, these insights from object relations theory help the pastor understand in greater depth the shape of the love that nurtures and sustains growth, that helps persons find an abundance of life, and that is ultimately grounded in God's love. If pastors are seeking to incarnate and represent to another person within a human relationship aspects of this love, then it is important to know as much as they can about what the love that brings healing and wholeness, and supports and sustains growth and development, looks like. Object relations theory helps to provide this knowledge.

Before going further, two words of caution. First, what has been said above should not be taken to mean that the pastoral care provider tries to be God. Just as an effective therapist trying to impact the object-representation of a client's mother knows that they cannot, in fact, be mother, so to , pastoral care providers need to remember that while they are trying to represent the love of God, they cannot be God. Secondly, there is no need to try to take on the role of psychoanalyst. Rather, the pastoral care giver adapts psychological theory and technique to the distinctive practice of pastoral ministry, and uses it in accordance with the requirements and expectations of that role.

Pastors bringing to this task a working perspective informed by object relations theory, will quickly recognize the central place that empathy has in a relationship aimed at changing self- and object-representations, including the God representation. While empathy has long been recognized as being an essential part of the counseling process, psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut, in the development of what has come to be called self psychology, has been the person who currently provides the richest and most useful account of the importance of empathy.[9] Robert Randall, in his recent book, Pastor and Parish, integrates Kohut's work with a theological perspective, and carefully explores the implications of self psychology for pastoral practice. Randall offers the following definition of empathy:

> First empathy is the capacity to think and feel oneself into the inner life of another person or a group of persons. In down-home language, it is the capacity to put yourself in the other's shoes. More formally stated, empathy is a self's reverberating understanding and deep emotional

> resonance with the self of another, where the former shares for a time the psychic reality of the latter.[10]

"Being empathic" means having the capacity to bracket, or temporarily set aside, one's assumptions, needs, and expectations in order to be truly open to what is going on in depth in the other person. It is clear from what has been said earlier (Chapters 1 and 2) that the capacity of a child's parents to be sufficiently empathic with the child is a crucial interpersonal ingredient in that child's growth.

Empathy serves several purposes in the pastoral relationship which are essential to pastoral efforts to impact the personal God representation. First, and most importantly, it "makes possible the painstaking unfolding of a patient's inner experiences and the emergence of specific developmental needs."[11] In doing this, it brings the internal, psychodynamic world of the other into greater awareness for both pastor and parishioner and increases the understanding of both. Secondly, it provides the client with the powerful, affective experience of being understood, valued, and attended to, which, in and of itself, has therapeutic value. Thirdly, such experiences in the relationship, lead to a "meaningful supportive bond"[12] being established between pastor and parishioner, on the basis of which future work proceeds.

While it is true, as indicated above, that pastors cannot, in relationship with parishioners, actually be either God or parent, they can be empathic, and the empathic experience can be the connection to

the internally held representations of these significant others. In a powerful passage from Randall's book, he writes:

> Consequently, empathy is not a 'preface to' or a 'necessary condition for' the 'real' work of helping others whether via pastoral psychotherapy, pastoral counseling, or pastoral care. Selves of pastors and parishes are restored and maintained in the actual occasion of being responded to empathically, where a path of empathy is established between the self and its self objects [significant others]. Employing empathetic observation, responding with empathic understanding, and broad encompassing empathy in others, constitutes the essence of the restoration of selves. Empathy is the grace of God by which the selves of struggling pastors and parishes are psychologically redeemed.[13]

Pastors need to be aware of what they shouldn't do as well as what they should, and remaining empathic helps in this task. The case studies offered earlier illustrate that self- and object-representations create a tendency to reexperience in present relationships the experiences out of which those representations developed. The pastoral task is to be in the relationship in such a way that the person can have a new relational experience. Therefore, pastors need to be sufficiently aware of what's going on (in both themselves and the other) to remain empathic and avoid taking on the role of uncaring and abusive other, even when such a role may be assigned them by the parishioner who acts in ways which are unconsciously calculated to elicit such behavior. Empathic failure occurs when pastors either consciously or unconsciously impose their own needs and conflicts on the other in a way which fails to demonstrate sufficient awareness of the other's needs.

Empathy is the fundamental need throughout the process; but more specific and concrete needs emerge against this background of empathic attunement. The pastor who relates empathically to the person will encounter a concrete developmental need that is expressed in the central psychological, theological "questions" that are developed earlier in the discussion of the case studies. The pastor needs to actively engage these questions, and insights derived from object relations theory helps to do this.

Having engaged the parishioner empathically and identified the "question" that emerges in relationship with God, the pastor helps the parishioner uncover the idolatrous image, works with the complex of experiences and needs out of which it has emerged, and fosters the development of a more genuine and growth promoting image. Basically, the pastor seeks to help the parishioner "answer" the "question" in a more accurate way. In providing such "help" the pastor follows the lead of the parishioner, in terms of what is needed.

The pastor focuses on being present to parishioners in the specificity of their developmental need, without interfering with, thwarting, or judging either the need, or attempts on their part to view the pastor as one who could meet it. The pastor's empathic attunement, availability, and non-interference in the parishioner's process, rather than attempts by pastors to actually "become" or "provide" all that a parishioner may wish them to be or do, allows parishoners to use them psychologically in the service of their own growth. The pastor who takes this stand incarnates an image of God available for the process of human "self-becoming,"[14] who values the genuine self in terms of where it is within that process, and adapts

to the specificity and uniqueness of individual needs, rather than demanding that persons adopt a false self in order to remain loved and related.

While being empathic has continuing primacy throughout the work that the pastor does, there are other pastoral "actions" that may facilitate this work. The pastor may accompany the relational representation of God with verbal representations, in which alternative views of God are offered. Pastors are legitimately expected to talk about God, and to utilize pastoral resources such as prayer, Scripture, and theology in doing this. Both Jordan and Clinebell offer thorough descriptions of how this might take place.[15] However, the image of God that is verbally offered, in whatever form that offering is made, must have the power to engage the dynamic image of God that the person holds. The new image needs to become relevant to the unique internal life of that person if it is to have any sort of transformative power. As Rizzuto puts it:

> If official religion had been able to help them, it would have had to offer them something other than the official God they could not handle. It would have listened to their fears, attended to their predicaments, and helped them tease out an acceptable God representation from the official God that Judaism or Catholicism offered them.[16]

The research presented here offers some insight about what promotes growth within relationship. Pastors can continue the work of combining such insights with the rich resources of the Biblical and theological traditions with which they are already familiar, and develop ways of talking about God which are adequate to this task. Two theological doctrines of historical importance are in special need

of rethinking in light of object relations theory. One is the equation of pride with sin; the other the emphasis on dependency in relationship with God. The case material presented suggests that the way these dimensions of human growth and experience are often dealt with by representatives of Christian faith can thwart, rather the facilitate, the growth of the self. Such rethinking has the potential to impact not only pastoral care and counseling situations, but also the way God is presented in preaching, teaching, and other pastoral activities.

Within a pastoral relationship, the internal world, or "being" of the pastor, is communiciated to the other person, and impacts what happens in the relationship. Jordan writes:

> It became painfully evident to me that knowing the skills of pastoral counseling were not enough. The main instrument in the art of pastoral counseling, my own self, needed to be explored and transformed if my own wounds and blind spots were not to adversely effect the persons I was seeing in counseling . . . The pastoral counselor's intrinsic world view and belief system have a profound impact on counseling relationships. The experience which have helped shape the values, attitudes, object relations, conscious and unconscious mental representation of God, and beliefs of the pastoral counselor play a powerful role in either promoting growth or adding barriers to creativity and development.[17]

This view is confirmed by the object relations perspective, which indicates that the self, or being, of the parents has as much if not more impact on the developing child as what they say or do. Therefore, the pastor's level of self-awareness is a crucial ingredient in the effectiveness of attempts to represent an alternative image of God, especially when the intention is to do that in an incarnational manner. Pastors, like the people who have come to

them, have their own developmental history, within which they have been both gifted and wounded, and out of which their own personal self- and object-representational world has emerged. The condition of their own personal God representation will have a significant impact on the God that is truly represented within the relationship.

Hence, pastors need to know themselves in depth, and to have worked with what they have discovered there sufficiently so that it will not interfere with the growth and healing of those they are trying to help and result in repetition of the kind of interpersonal experience which has been used to form the idolatrous image of God which the person has come in hopes of changing. This should not be taken to mean that to be effective, providers of pastoral care must have resolved all their own issues, and transcended their humaness. Here, the concept of the "good enough" parent, that was introduced earlier, may be helpful. The concept of "good enough" is quite different then the idea of "perfect." The "good enough" pastor is not the person who never makes mistake, who always knows the right thing to say, and never disappoints, frustrates, or lets people down; rather, it is the person who is able to interact with others in a nuturing, growth promoting fashion enough of the time, so the other person experiences growth within that relationship over the long haul.

Pastors working from an object relations perspective will have an appreciation for the fact that events in the life of the person taking place outside the one-to-one pastoral relationship, also have an impact on the God image. That perspective points out that changes in the self-representation impact the object-representation. Hence, pastors will be appreciative of all persons, situations, and

institutions that are appropriately supportive of genuine human growth and development, whether explicitly "religious" or not. Further, the pastor will encourage the development, within the congregational community as a whole, of a variety of opportunities which serve this purpose, many of which are not dependent on ongoing pastoral leadership. Pastors providing meaningful pastoral care and counseling aimed at having some transformative impact on the internal God image will understand that there are a variety of situations which can be utilized in support of these efforts, both inside the church and without.

In concluding this section on pastoral intervention, it is important to emphasize that when pastors engage a person's God image, they are walking on holy ground, ground that has sacred meaning to the person who holds this image. No matter how bizzare or destructive that image may appear to the outside observer, no matter how distorted it looks when compared with the God of love affirmed out of Christian faith, object relations theory argues that the image has meaning and value to the person who holds it, and that it has played some significant role in maintaining and preserving the integrity of the self. Such images may have initially served, and may continue to serve, a protective and defensive function, a function felt to be necessary to the preservation of psychic stability. We saw this in the case of Jim, where a God representation that obviously draws on abusive parental introjects, and thus stifles the growth of the self in the long run, also serves, in its very harshness, to help him limit and control certain impulses that otherwise might be experienced as overwhelming and unmanagable. Work with Jim's God representation will

obviously seek to have some transformative impact upon its harsh, demanding, and narcissistic character, but the importance of this image to Jim, and the positive as well as negative role it has played within his development, must be understood and worked with if it is to be dealt with in a meaningful way.

If the idolatrous image is prematurely confronted or weakened, without the prior establishment of a supportive relationship and the strengthening of Jim's capacity to handle his own inner experience, then the "cure" may be worse than the "disease." Further, if the engagement with the personal God image is undertaken in an uninformed, intrusive manner, that does not take into consideration and show appreciation for the importance of this "object" to the person who possesses it, then the pastor may be experienced as prematurely depriving the person of something they need. If this happens, then the pastor may become a "bad object," and the stage set for repetition in the relationship, rather than repair.

Finally, pastors need to have appreciation of the possibility that the growth of the person towards a changed image of God may involve living for a period of time without the felt presence of God. This may represent the person's need to reject all images of God, good and bad.[18] Pastors should exercise care at this point that their own awareness of, and enthusiasm for, the possibility of a more growth promoting image of God, does not interfere with the process of the parishioner in a manner which blocks whatever is behind this expression of feeling. Rather, pastors can count on the fact that in being present and empathic at such times they are doing what they can do to represent to the other the acceptability of such feelings.

Footnotes to Chapter 7

1. McDargh, 2.

2. Kaufmann, Theological Imagination, 76.

3. See Jordan, p. 23.

4. Jordan, p. 18.

5. Jordan, p. 23.

6. See, for example, John Patton, Pastoral Counseling: A Ministry of the Church (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983).

7. Howard Clinebell, Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling (Nashville: Abingdon Press; 1966; rev. and enlarged 1984), 66.

8. McDargh, 132.

9. See any of the books by Kohut referred to in the Bibliography.

10. Randall, 139.

11. Crayton Rowe, Jr., and David McIsaac, Empathic Attunement (New Jersey: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1989), 21.

12. Ibid., p. 21.

13. Randall, 141.

14. The term "self-becoming" is borrowed from McDargh.

15. See Jordan, pp. 15-41., Clinebell, 103-136; also, Carolyn Bohler, Prayer on Wings (San Diego: Laura Media, 1990) provides an excellent description of the use of prayer to broaden one's images of God.

16. Rizzuto, 199.

17. Jordan, 133.

18. McDargh, 129-130.

Chapter 8

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This project started out by immersing the reader in the world of object relations theory. Then an attempt was made to integrate that theory with a theological point of view, as represented by imaginative or metaphorical theology. Finally, case studies were used to illustrate the application of this perspective, and suggestions made regarding pastoral attention, assessment, and intervention. The purpose has been to provide pastors with a tool (with both thinking and doing dimensions) that could be used in the actual practice of ministry. The focus has not been on how this perspective could be utilized by someone who specializes in pastoral psychotherapy; rather, it has been on how such a perspective might be helpful in the practice of pastoral ministry in a parish situation.

Any attempt to work meaningfully with people involves a commitment to a way of understanding that then informs such work. Such a commitment operates at both a conscious and unconscious level. Yet such a perspective must also be seen as limited; including some things, it leaves out others. Paul Pruyser writes:

> All disciplines deal with reality. All helping professions are able to come up with definitions of the real problem. Disciplines and professions represent only so many different perspectives in which anything real can be grasped. Each perspective is partial, limited, specific.[1]

This is obviously true for the perspective that has been developed here. Of the many questions that might be raised about this particular perspective, there are two that I want to address by way of some concluding remarks.

The first relates to the strong focus throughout on valuing the development and growth of the self. The argument has been made from a variety of different perspectives that such a focus is in itself an expression of an unhealthy narcissism, typical of what has come to be called the "me" generation in which self-gratification is the primary driving force.[2] Christian faith, with its historic and contemporary focus on service to others, its reliance on the model of Jesus as sacrificial love, and its well developed critique of the problems that stem from self-centered preoccupation, has been, and will continue to be, invoked in this critique, and people whose Christian faith is a meaningful part of their lives may be especially vulnerable to such criticism. On the one hand this is a good thing, for it helps people struggling with the issues raised in this paper to keep things in perspective--to not lose sight of the total picture, to understand that there are other things at stake. If it serves this purpose, then this dimension of Christian faith can serve as a corrective to whatever tendencies we have to attach ultimate importance to our own individual growth and development.

At the same time, we cannot ignore the evidence that supports the need to value the self and to attend to its growth as contributory to our capacity to value and care for others and our world in a meaningful way; further, we must recognize that what can look like

"caring for others," if not grounded in a satisfactory level of personal self-esteem, may not be the kind of caring that can help others in their search for an abundance of life. As Howard Clinebell puts it:

> Because we had human, limited parents who had human, limited parents, all of us are limited, to some degree, in our ability to love fully. Many people are severely crippled in their ability to love in growth-nurturing ways. This is the heart of their problem. To say to such a person, "You need to love God and neighbor more," is like shouting to a person floating on a log in mid-ocean, "What you need is dry land!" Nothing could be truer or less helpful. What such a person needs is to know where the land is and how to get there. Counseling and therapy are methods of helping people learn to love themselves, their neighbor, and God more fully and freely.[3]

A second challenge to what has been said here is that it may not place sufficient importance on the activity of God, and focuses instead on the activity of persons (parent, pastor, etc.). Basically this is true. Pastors, since they are persons, are involved in doing what they can do as persons. Therefore, an attempt has been made here, in practical terms, to help pastors focus attention on what they can attempt to do from the human side, in acts of ministry to other persons. At the same time, this perspective leaves ample space for the activity of God. The particular person working with such a perspective can develop this understanding in a variety of ways.

From my own point of view, to talk about the activity of God within the process of growth and development is to talk about mystery, and I am more comfortable acknowledging my respect for this mystery than I am claiming a greater understanding than is really ours to have. I can think of no better words to conclude this project with,

than those which Rollo May used some forty years ago to describe this same mystery.

> Finally, after all our discussion, we come to the realization that there is a great area in the transformation of personality which we do not understand, and which we can attribute only to the mysterious creativity of life . . . In this transformation of personality, we, as counselors may have had some small thing to do. But we know we have not remade the person. We know we have done precious little-merely guided a bit here, directed a bit there; and the creative forces of life have effected the miracle of transformation . . . Before the creative forces of life, the true counselor stands humbly. And his humility is not of the false sort, for the deeper his understanding of personality the more clearly he realizes how minute his efforts in comparison to the greatness of the whole. He says with the psalmist, "Lord, this too wonderful for me." I am myself frank to say that when the limits of my own understanding are reached, I understand the miracle of the transformation of personality in terms of the age-old but ever-new concept, the grace of God.[4]

Footnotes to Chapter 8

1. Paul Pruyser, The Minister as Diagnostician (Phil.: Westminster Press, 1976), 16.

2. See for example, Christopher Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism (New York: Warner Books, 1979).

3. Clinebell, 67.

4. Rollo May, The Art of Counseling (Nashville: Abingdon Press, MCMXXXIX), 162.

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APPENDIX

1. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Course Description

The course that I designed and taught as part of this project was offered at the Athenaeum of Ohio, during the summer session, June 18-29, 1990 (three hours a day, three days a week). The exact description of the course as distributed by the college, was as follows:

"Object relations theory is a view of psychological development which describes the process by which our earliest experiences with primary caregivers become internalized within the human psyche. The results of this process have a significant impact both on our developing sense of self, and on our experiences of others. This course will pay particular attention to the way our object relations may impact how we imagine and experience our relationship with God. The course is designed primarily to help pastoral counselors use object relations theory in their work, but might also benefit others who are working with issues of spiritual growth and development."

Nine students, representing significant differences in current life situation, work experience, educational background, and theological perspective, enrolled in the course. There was evidence of a unifying interest admist this diversity in the integration of theological and psychological perspectives. The course met for two weeks, and consisted of class lectures, readings, discussions, case studies, and a final exam. All classes were audio taped in their entirety.

At the end of the course, students were asked to respond to two separate evaluations, one designed by me, the other by the Athenaeum. Material relevant to the course follows as Appendix items 2-8.

2. COURSE SYLLABUS

Syllabus PA 304

Alan deCourcy
(H) 523-4774
(W) 791-5990

Object Relations Theory and the Image of God

Session I (6/18/90)

Introduction to the course - purpose, questions, assumptions.

A clinical case study will be used to raise the questions to be addressed in this course. Basic theological and psychological assumptions that underly an object relations approach to the imaging of God will be explored. The vocabulary of object relations theory will be defined and illustrated.

Session II (6/19/90)

The development of self- and object-representation - symbols and individuation.

Assigned reading: W.G. Hamilton, Self and Others, pp. 35-37 (xerox)

Margaret Mahler's descriptions of the development of self- and object-representations through the process of separation/individuation - symbiosis, hatching, practicing, rapprochement, object constancy - will be explained, discussed, and illustrated.

Session III (6/21/90)

Related concepts.

Assigned reading: W.G. Hamilton, Self and Others, pp. 100-106 (xerox)

This session will look at D.W. Winnicott's conception of the "transitional object" and the "true self/false self", and H. Kohut's understanding of "empathy", "narcissism", and "self object transferences."

Session IV (6/25/90)

The object representation of God.

Assigned reading: John McDargh's, Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion, pp. 117-132 (xerox)

The research of Ana-Maria Rizzuto and John McDargh will be used to examine how the object representation of God develops, and the implications of this development for the emergence of a faith perspective that promotes the process of "self becoming."

Session V (6/26/90)

The application of object relations theory to pastoral care and counseling.

Assigned reading: Merle Jordan, Taking on the Gods, pp. 1-58 (bookstore)

The application of object relations theory to pastoral work will be examined through an extended case presentation and discussion.

Session VI (6/28/90)

Application, II

Assigned reading: Merle Jordan, TOG, pp. 107-152

Application of what has been learned in the course to concrete pastoral situations will continue. Students are encouraged to use this session to reflect on their own pastoral work. Particular attention will be paid to the integration of our theological and psychological perspectives in the images of God we bring to the pastoral situation.

Purpose of this course:

The purpose of this course is to provide students with a basic understanding of object relations theory that will help them conceptualize how the object representation of God develops and is involved in the growth and development of the self; to help them apply this understanding to their work with persons in such a manner that they become more effective pastoral care givers; and to facilitate the integration of theological and psychological perspectives.

Course requirements:

1. Since there are only six class sessions, attendance at all sessions is critical. Concepts will be presented in each session which must be understood in order to benefit from the session that follows.

2. Readings are assigned in the syllabus for the day they are due. Some of the readings contain technical language or concepts which you may not be familiar with. Note what confuses you, and if it is not explained in class, please bring it to my attention.

3. A one hour final examination will be given in the last class session. The exam will ask you to define terms, and to reflect on case material in light of what you have learned.

Class attendance, participation reflecting the completion of reading assignments, and performance on the final exam, will be the criteria used in determining the two credit grade. Those interested in receiving three credits will need to complete a paper, the subject of which will be determined in consultation with me.

3. COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY

Annotated Bibliography
PA 304
Object Relations Theory and the Image of God

Blanck, Rubin and Gertrude. Ego Psychology II: Psychoanalytic Developmental Psychology. New York: Columbia University Press, 1979.

- - - -. Beyond Ego Psychology: Developmental Object Relations Theory. New York: Columbia University Press, 1979.

The work of the Blanck's is an attempt to apply the concepts of psychoanalytic object relations theory to the practice of psychotherapy. Their writing is both theoretical and practical, but is difficult to understand without some prior understanding of psychoanalytic theory. A particularly helpful chapter is found in Ego Psychology II, "Diagnosis in Terms of Organizing Process."

Browning, Don S. Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies: A Critical Conversation in the Theology of Culture. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987.

This book does an excellent job of examining the underlying theological and ethical assumptions that inform modern therapeutic approaches. Of particular importance is Browning's description of "deep metaphors and obligations" found within psychological theory, and the chapters on Erikson and Kohut.

Buckley, Peter, ed. Essential Papers on Object Relations. New York: New York University Press, 1986.

This book consists of a collection of articles by persons who have been crucial in the development of the object relations perspective. The collection includes two papers by Mahler on separation-individuation, and Winnicott's paper on the development of transitional objects.

Hamilton, N. Gregory. Self and Others: Object Relations Theory in Practice. New Jersey: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1988.

This is probably the most readable of the more technical books on the theory and technique of object relations theory. Hamilton defines his terms clearly, and provides numerous examples both from his practice and from daily living to illustrate them.

Horner, Althea. Object Relations and the Developing Ego in Therapy. New York: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1979.

- - - - -. Being and Loving. New Jersey: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1986.

Horner has an amazing ability to write books both the clinician who already has an understanding of psychological theory, and the layperson who may lack such an understanding. The 1979 book is written for the clinician and does an excellent job of combining both theory and practice. It is especially helpful in examining each of Mahler's stages, and showing both the healthy and the more pathological outcomes. The 1986 book is one that I often recommend to clients, and it helps them understand what they are dealing with without resorting to technical jargon.

Jordan, Merle. Taking on the Gods: The Task of the Pastoral Counselor. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986.

Required reading. Jordan does an excellent job of showing how one might apply some of the insights of object relations theory to the actual task of pastoral care and counseling. The book is very helpful in providing concrete examples of how the pastoral person might work with the God image in the encounter with a hurting person.

Kaufman, Gordon D. The Theological Imagination: Constructing the Concept of God. Philadelphia: The Westminister Press, 1981.

Kaufman argues that the essential theological task is the construction and exploration of an image of God that is both "transcendent" and "humane", and relevant to the particular problems faced in today's world. His view that both our words about, and experience of, God is related to the "constructive power of the imagination" suggest some of the theological implications of an object relations approach.

Mahler, M.S., F. Pine, and A. Bergman. The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant. New York: Basic Books, 1975.

A groundbreaking book in the development of contemporary object relations theory, in which Mahler and her colleagues reported the results of their infant research and formulated the developmental theory of symbiosis and separation-individuation.

McDargh, John. Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion: On Faith and the Imaging of God. Maryland: University Press of America, 1983.

Highly recommended! McDargh writes both clearly and creatively about object relations theory, the object-representation of God, and faith development. This book includes two extensive case studies which are particularly helpful because they are not clinical in nature. McDargh is masterful in moving back and forth between psychological and theological perspectives, and he demonstrates what genuine integration of these perspectives looks like.

McFague, Sallie. Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982.

- - - -. Models of God: Theology for and Ecological, Nuclear Age. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987.

Both these books are aimed at helping the reader understand how the language we use about God functions in a metaphorical fashion, and that such language is shaped by, and in turn shapes, the underlying images of God that impact our lives. The earlier book is an indepth exploration of the metaphorical character of religious language; the second book attempts to build on the first by doing an "experiment" in the metaphorical construction of an image of God that is true to Christian faith and meaningful to persons in the contemporary world. She explores the metaphors of God as Mother, Lover, and Friend.

Miller, Alice. Prisoners of Childhood: The Drama of the Gifted Child and the Search for the True Self. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1979.

A short but powerful book, in which the author writes movingly about the struggle of the child to give expression to the "true self", and explores the consequences when the significant others in the child's life are unable to respond to that struggle with empathy and support. This book is particularly helpful in illuminating the various aspects of "narcissism".

Randall, Robert. Pastor and Parish: The Psychological Core of Ecclesiastical Conflict. New York: Human Science Press, 1988.

This book uses the "self-psychology" of Heinz Kohut to look at the problems that often arise in parish situations between pastor and parish. Randall provides clear definitions of many of Kohut's terms, and particular attention is given to the "self object" transferences. Particularly helpful are the examples given of the narcissistic components of the God-human encounter.

Rizzuto, Ana-Maria. The Birth of the Living God: A Psychoanalytic Study. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.

In this book, Rizzuto reports on the research she has done on how the object-representation of God develops. She is particularly helpful in describing the differences between the classical Freudian view of God and an object relations approach. The book is very theoretical at points, and it would be very difficult to follow her argument without some prior understanding of psychoanalytic theory. Her case studies are excellent.

Rowe, Crayton E., and David MacIssac. Empathic Attunement. New Jersey: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1989.

Excellent introduction to Kohut's self psychology. The authors present Kohut's sometimes difficult concepts in a clear and simple manner and illustrate their usefulness in the clinical situation.

6/15/90
Alan deCourcy

4. GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN COURSE

Glossary of Terms
(Adapted from Hamilton, Self and Others)

Object:
A person, place, thing, fantasy, feeling or idea that is invested with emotional energy (cathected): is loved or hated. Objects can be internal or external.

Internal Object-Representation:
An image, idea, fantasy, or memory relevant to a person, place, or thing.

External Object:
The actual person, place, or thing.

Self-Representation:
Conscious or unconscious mental representation (idea, feeling, image, fantasy) relevant to one's own person in a "fundamental, biologic, way." What the person means when they say: "That's me." Always internal.

Object Relations Unit:
A self-representation and internal object-representation connected by some drive or affect. A change in the self-representation effects the object-representation and vice-versa.

Self-Object:
When the distinction between the self and object in an object relations unit is unclear: the object is experienced as a part of the self.

Ego:
A term used to describe that in the psyche which does the organizing of experiencing; includes the mental functions of differentiation and integration.

Integration:
An ego function. The bringing together of two mental elements (perceptions, memories, representations, emotions, ideas).

Differentiation:
An ego function. The setting apart of two mental elements.

Note: Integration and differentiation are two complementary processes which lead to organization of experience into self- and object-representations. Integration of like elements cannot occur without differentiating like elements from unlike elements. "The capacity to integrate and differentiate experience depends on an orderly neurophysiologic unfolding of ego functions in an environment which is neither physically nor emotionally depriving or overwhelming."

Defense Mechanism:
An unconscious psychological activity aimed at preserving the integrity of the self.

Projection:
A differentiating process in which an unwanted aspect of the self is attributed to another person or an internal object.

Introjection:
An integrating process in which the behavior, attitude, mood, or demeanor of an external object that has importance to the self is taken into the self and held intact. That which is taken in is called the "introject."

Identification:
When valued qualities of a previously introjected object become a part of the self-representation.

Splitting:
Mentally keeping apart of contradictory experiences (good/bad; pleasurable/unpleasurable; frustrating/gratifying) of self or significant others.

Maternal Matrix:
The interpersonal situation of mother/child existing in a bonded, attached relationship (emerging with symbiosis) which provides external support and through which the child is supplied with needed sources for their ongoing developmental journey.

5. DIAGRAM OF SEPARATION-INDIVIDUATION

6. COURSE EVALUATION I

7. RESULTS OF COURSE EVALUATION I

8. COURSE EVALUATION II

COURSE EVALUATION

1. Briefly state your reason for taking this course and your expectations of it.

2. Did this course meet your expectations? If not, why not?

3. Has this course helped you to become more effective in providing effective pastoral care?

4. Did this course help you to understand the relationship between a theological and a psychological perspective?

5. Did the course help you to integrate your own theological and psychological perspectives?

6. Did the course provide a balance of theory and practical examples? If not, which did you feel the need for more of?

7. Were the reading assignments helpful in understanding what was being discussed in class?

8. Do you feel that the course provided you with a working knowledge of object relations theory?

9. What did you like best about the course?

10. What did you like the least?